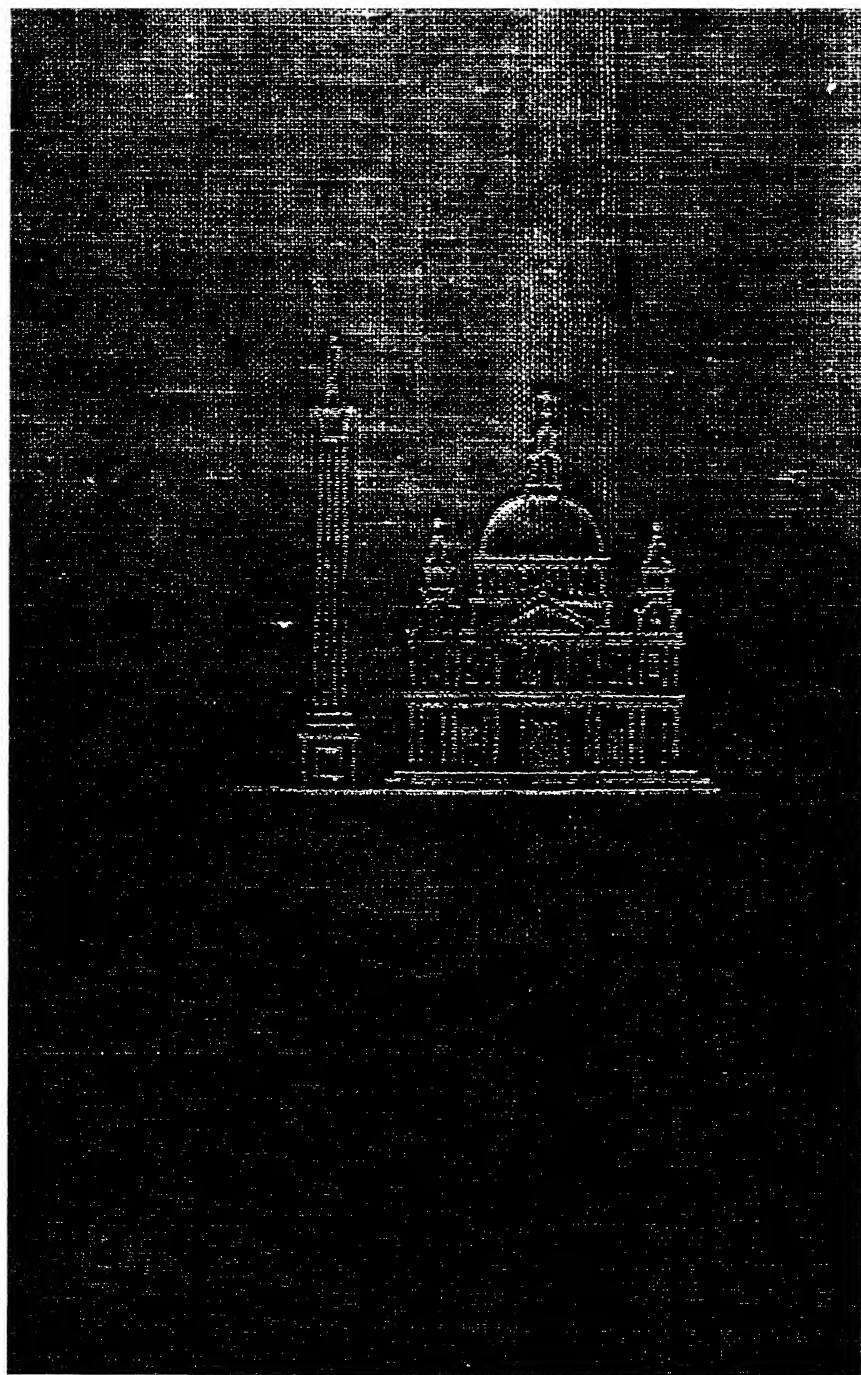


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*London, thou art the flower of cities all.*

WILLIAM DUNBAR, c. 1500

# *Flower of Cities*

## A BOOK OF LONDON

STUDIES AND SKETCHES  
BY TWENTY-TWO AUTHORS

illustrated with original drawings  
twenty-four plates in monochrome  
twelve plates in colour  
and two maps  
in colour

1949

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## INTRODUCTION

LONDON: no subject is more beguiling, nor more beset with pitfalls. For London is all things to all men and there is no end to its meanings. To visitors no less than to Londoners themselves, it is an idea more than a place-name. It is a huge and weathered monument to every form of human achievement—trade, government, justice, art and learning. And yet monument is not quite the right word, for it is also full of movement. It is still the birthplace of experiment in thought and modes of living, as well as being the repository of antique dignities. Its people preserve the same unruffled attitude towards both, yet for each one of them, as for the less restrained visitor, London signifies something personal and quite specific—and almost certainly different.

Accordingly, to do full justice to the sum of London's many-sidedness, a number of authors have been enlisted, each to write about one selected aspect of London. In addition, artists of similar qualifications were invited to illustrate many of these literary contributions with original drawings. Some highly felicitous collaborations have resulted, not least in the two cases where author and artist happen to be the same person. The lively and topical note achieved by this treatment is counterpointed in part by reproductions of older pictorial impressions of London. There are, also, modern outdoor colour photographs and reproductions of London's art treasures, some engaging pre-war posters, portraits of contemporary theatre personalities, and specimens of our stage designers' craft. In short, we have tried to match the almost infinite variety of the subject with a rich diversity of illustration. We have tried to match, also, that marriage of past with present which London everywhere so notably epitomises.

The book is divided into three parts. The first—'Heart of the Nation'—deals with historic and institutional aspects of London: its capital essence, so to speak. It begins, as so many visitors' impressions will begin, with the railway stations, with their often fantastic architecture and their blend of exciting occasion and period nostalgia.

The rest of Part One contains accounts of the unique relationship between Westminster and Whitehall; of London's palaces and parks; of the City, once described as the richest square mile in the world;

of the rites and habitations of the Law; of Fleet Street, traditional centre of London gossip; and of the metropolitan Thames and its great port.

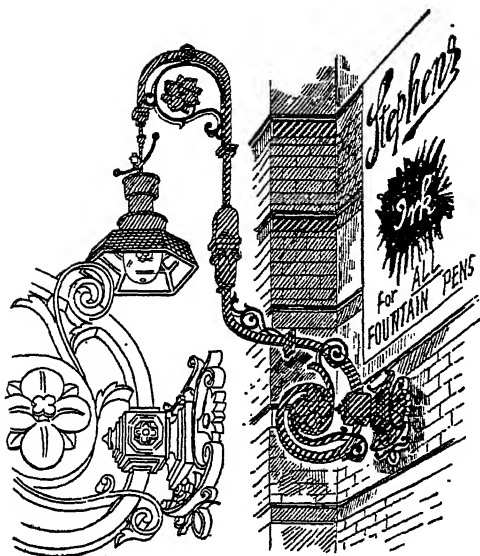
London is also where some of us live. Part Two might be described as a collection of home truths. It deals, in a strongly personal vein, with some well-known residential districts, each of which has its own distinctive character and even conventions. Starting from the West End, with its exclusive tone and *cachet*, the colonies of St. John's Wood, Hampstead, South Kensington, Bloomsbury, Soho and Chelsea are charted in turn. A distant suburb swims into our ken and the East End is journey's end.

Part Three is concerned with some of the less tangible riches of the city, with its arts and holiday graces. There are articles on the museums and art galleries, on that infant prodigy, the B.B.C., on the contemporary theatre and on London's astonishingly popular ballet, now a native growth. This section, and the book, ends with a review of the year's gala occasions, from the great sporting festivals to the Lord Mayor's Show. It is a good article to end with, for it shows that London has something for everyone. And so, we hope, has this 'Book of London'.

*Part One*

HEART OF THE NATION





*John Betjeman*

## LONDON RAILWAY STATIONS

*Drawings by Edward Bawden*

**T**he study of railway stations is something like the study of churches. It can be turned into archaeological detection work. For piscina, read cast-iron lamp bracket; for arcading, read girder construction; for transepts, read waiting rooms; for hangings, read tin advertisements. There, with very little practice, anyone with an eye for detail can date the objects inspected. Picture to yourself a disused platform of a rather forgotten station, let us say South Hampstead, the first station after Euston ( $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles) on the L.M.S. electric line to Watford. It opens late and shuts early and few people seem to use it. When I was a boy we called it Loudoun Road and the booking-office building stood, as it still stands, looking rather like a small mid-

Victorian brick vicarage harmonising happily with the Gothic fancies of this lilac-shaded part of St. John's Wood. I should think it was built in the late 'seventies from the style of architecture, by which time enough platforms had been constructed at Euston to make it possible for the London and North Western to run an enlarged suburban service.

I have never departed from nor alighted at South Hampstead. Not being modern, my hours are too long either side of the day to take advantage of its times of opening. I prefer to imagine the station. I like to think that it contains the various fittings of a former age for which my eye is always on the watch when using an unfamiliar station. Perhaps there are some very old tickets in the booking-office. Suppose one were to buy a first-class return to Chalk Farm, which would mean going down to Euston and coming back again: if those tickets still survive they will probably be printed with "Loudoun Road" on them and the letters L.N.W.R. Under the treads of the stairs to the platform there may be those tin advertisements saying *Iron Jelloids, Iron Jelloids, Iron Jelloids*, in blue on an orange ground, insisting, as one ascends, on the weakness of one's heart and its need for the stamina which those pills can supply. Still in imagination, I walk right down to the end of the platform where stands the oldest of lamp standards, a graceful thing on twisted columns with perhaps a six-sided glass cage for the gas-burner, and the name of the iron foundry where it was made at the base of its column. Against the station wall there may be tin signs for Mazawattee Tea and the still-familiar black and blue splotch of Stephen's Ink on a white ground. And, of course, there will be those two old friends Venos Cough Cure and Dr. J. Collis Browne's Chlorodyne.

Then what waiting-rooms may there not be! Gothic Revival cast-iron grates in which no fire has been lighted since the days when a mountain of glowing coal warmed the early-morning pin-stripe bottoms of city gentlemen who used this station as the

preliminary part of a journey from Boundary Road to Euston, thence by steam train on the inner circle from Euston Square to Aldersgate. (Ah, Aldersgate! alas, the Refreshment Room has been bombed: that refreshment room at the top of the steps, surveying all four platforms from the height of the great semi-circular glass roof: that refreshment room where, as Mr. John Hayward once pointed out to me, the words AFTERNOON TEAS A SPECIALITY were affixed in letters of white china to the plate-glass window.) The walls of the waiting-room will be green. The lighting, gas. There will perhaps be a framed collection of photographs: Beauty spots of the L. & N. W. R.; Killarney, Sackville Street, Dublin; Blarney Castle (the L. & N. W. always liked to give the impression that it owned all the Irish railways); St. George's Landing Stage, Liverpool; Bettws-y-coed; Warwick Castle. These will be in sepia with gilt lettering on the wooden surround. Then there will be a framed looking-glass in which it will be impossible to see all one's face at once because painted on the surface are the words IDRIS TABLE WATERS and a long maiden in clothes rather like a water-lily, holding in her hand a sparkling glass of IDRIS. These are but some of the delights I imagine there may be at South Hampstead.

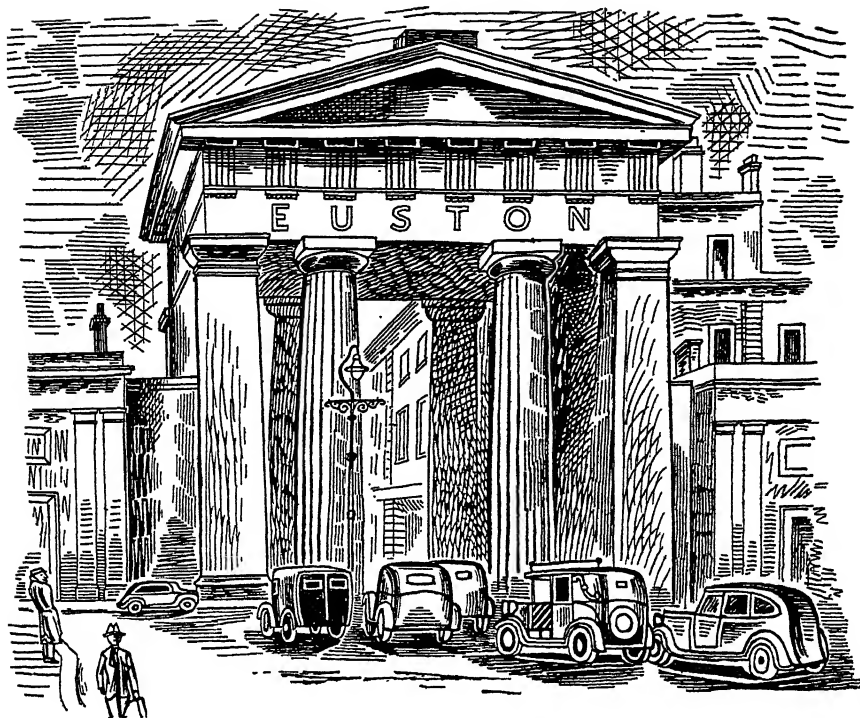
The serious scholar of London railway stations will make the historical approach. I unfold the map of my Bradshaw's Railway Companion for 1841. London shrinks to its size a hundred years ago. I notice that there were fields beyond Regent's Park and Pentonville and Islington and Hackney. Bethnal Green was in London, but not Stratford. South-east of Bermondsey and south of Walworth there were still fields between terraces and squares, fields that in two years are to be filled with either Italianate merchants' houses amid laurel shrubbery or with rows of two-storey artisans' dwellings. Chelsea and Brompton and Kensington still had separate personalities. No railways dared to invade the centre of London. Westminster was even more sacred than the City. There they are on the map, little



pink lines, pushing tentatively towards the heart of the metropolis.

These early stations, you must remember, are part of the Georgian age. They are stately but not sumptuous. They are spreading but not soaring. They suggest coaches pulled by iron horses. They are merely another sort of posting inn, not something private, fenced off and of another world, which railways have now become. They are the stables of the iron horses and they blend naturally with the drays which clatter over cobbles towards them. The carriages unloaded from the trains were pulled away by horses to the noblemen's houses of Mayfair. Euston (1837), London Bridge (1838), Paddington (1839), are still on their original sites. Philip Hardwick's magnificent Doric arch of granite (1837) at Euston originally had two lodges flanking each side and was visible from the Euston Road; the outer piers of these have been destroyed. It was the gateway not only to all the country houses of the North, but also to a new age. The little iron sheds of the station behind it, so ridiculed by Pugin, are rather an anti-climax. Successive generations have treated this noble arch scurvily and its glory has been hidden by the Euston Hotel. As an essay of the Greek Revival, I consider the arch even now, almost shorn of its lodges, the noblest thing in London, nobler even than St. Pancras Church or the British Museum or the Hyde Park Screen. Only one building rivalled it and that was Rennie's Waterloo Bridge. The L.M.S. made determined efforts to remove Euston Arch altogether. British Railways will probably succeed in doing so, for no one, except you and me, dear reader, yet believes that there can be anything beautiful about a railway station.

London Bridge, now a shattered collection of girders and temporary-looking platforms, has little to show of the old terminus of the Greenwich Railway, that remarkable line carried on 878 bricked arches, which was merged with the South Eastern & Chatham. There is a spacious dignity, created by



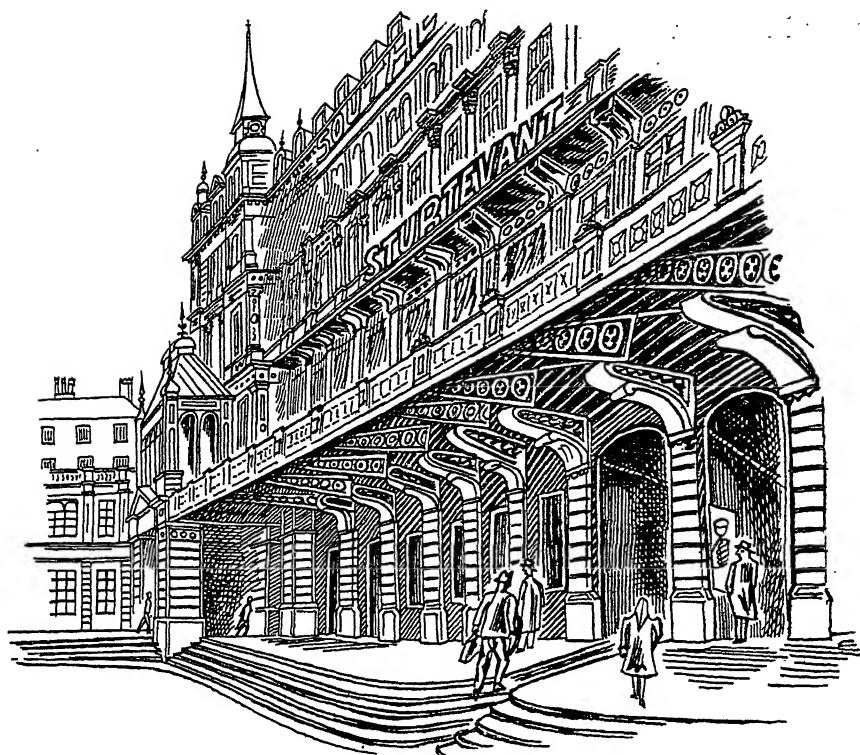
white brick walls and an arching roof, about the terminus part of the station whence trains depart over a loop line via the Crystal Palace (Low Level) and Norwood to Victoria, through Italianate stations and brick cuttings and sudden elevations from which one may see the brick Italianate houses of Ruskin's South London, the prehistoric monsters of the Crystal Palace Park, and perhaps glimpse Sherlock Holmes hiding amid the laurels, lamp-posts and ivy-clad clinker of a merchant's private drive.

The severe nine-arched entrance of Paddington has disappeared entirely, though the space in front of where it stood, now under glass, is still known as "the lawn". But two others of

these six early stations survive. Nine Elms, erected in 1838 by Sir William Tite (architect of the Royal Exchange) as the terminus of the South Western Railway, may be found standing, classic, stuccoed and deserted, amid the gasworks, goods yards and factories of that district where strikes seem often to originate. There are no passengers and the more important goods yards seem to be in another part of Nine Elms, so that this building and its platforms are an early station survival. I know of no other more complete example except Philip Hardwick's Great Arch at the old and disused terminus in Birmingham of the London to Birmingham Railway.

By the 'fifties, the old coaching view of railways was out of date. They were establishing an architecture of their own and, as keenly as Tractarians and Evangelicals, they joined in the Battle of the Styles, Classic *v.* Gothic. On the whole the Classic style won. Euston, long a pioneer in railway architecture, set the tone with the Euston Great Hall, which was completed in 1849. It was the joint design of old Philip Hardwick and his son Philip Charles Hardwick. Never had there been and never has there been since in England so magnificent a piece of railway architecture. This huge hall is now ruined with little kiosks and enquiry bureaux built in a jazz-modern style by the L.M.S. But not even these destroy its proportions and it is still possible to note its double staircase, its rich ceiling, its figured consoles supporting the ceiling and carved by John Thomas, who made the figures and bosses on the Houses of Parliament.

To compare with Euston, there is nothing. Other lines as they built their termini and chief suburban stations went in for classic, but the classic style preferred was that of the French Renaissance. It may be seen in those stations of the 'sixties—Charing Cross, Cannon Street, Broad Street, Farringdon Street, Aldersgate, Highbury, Bow, Camden Town—and even survived into the next decade when Holborn Viaduct Station was built.

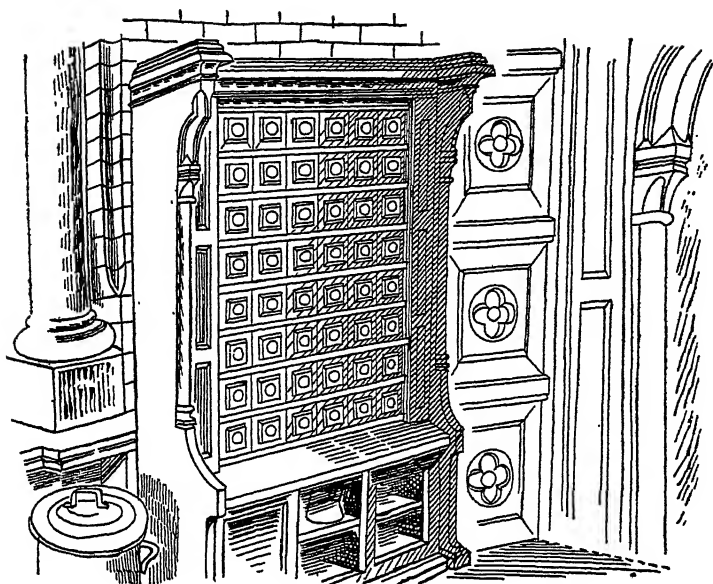


The architect of Charing Cross and Cannon Street was Edward Middleton Barry, a son of Sir Charles, the architect of the Houses of Parliament. Edward's masterpiece is undoubtedly the Charing Cross Hotel (1864). I know few pleasanter meeting-places than the first floor of that building. A broad staircase leads to corridors done in the manner of Sir John Soane, unexpectedly Græco-Roman when there is so much French Renaissance about the exterior. On this floor is the suite of rooms I call "the club". There is a smoking-room with a bar attached, a billiard-room adjoining, and one can walk out on to a balcony, drink in hand, to survey the crowds and trains of the station below. There are horsehair

seats in the smoking-room, a bookshelf with a set of Shakespeare and a guide to the Southern Railway and one has the place to oneself while all around, in stately dining-rooms, private luncheons are being held by old-fashioned boards of directors, the Ouse Catchment Board, the Blackwall Tunnel Company, the Tower Hamlets Development Society, the United Kingdom Union of Persecuting Protestants. Much of this activity used to occur at the Cannon Street Hotel (1866) designed by the same architect. The station itself at Cannon Street is a far finer building than that at Charing Cross, which has been deprived of its original semicircular roof. Barry's towers and cupolas at the river opening of Cannon Street compare well with Wren's steeples and blend this great structure into the steepled outline of the City.

The only time the Great Western went in for Classic in a big way was when it employed Philip Charles Hardwick to design the Paddington Hotel in the 'sixties. The dining-room here, with its curving caryatids probably by John Thomas, was almost up to the standard of Euston's Græco-Roman office buildings. Just before the Hitler War this dining-room, or "coffee-room" as it was called, was, alas, ruined by being streamlined with plywood in a jazz-modern manner, so that it is now like any semi-smart new restaurant. The Great Western otherwise has been fairly loyal to Tudor, a style which it first adopted at Temple Meads, Bristol, and still employs there. When Brunel rebuilt Paddington station he employed Digby Wyatt to decorate the ironwork of the roof. These carefully chosen colours survived until the other day when they were all painted over a utilitarian brown and yellow.

The richest Gothic station is, of course, St. Pancras (1868). The enormous iron and glass roof with a clear span of 240 feet, 100 feet high and 700 feet long, makes the trains and platforms below it look like a model railway. It was designed by P. W. Barlow, the civil engineer. The tie beams that hold it



are below the station and form a roof for the enormous vaults, which are under the whole area of the station. The hotel, which is attached to the station but not related to it, is by Sir Gilbert Scott. Ferguson much objected to it. *There is no proportion between the shed and its uses, and everything looks out of place, and most of all the Gothic mouldings and brick work borrowed from the domestic architecture of the Middle Ages, which thrusts itself between the gigantic iron ribs of the roof.*

Ferguson did not like the Gothic Revival, and even Sir Gilbert does not seem to have been wholly enthusiastic about St. Pancras Hotel. Never one to underestimate his own work, he says of it: *my own belief is that it is possibly too good for its purpose, but having been disappointed, through Lord Palmerston, of my ardent hope of carrying out my style in the Government offices, and the subject having been in the meanwhile taken out of my hands by other architects, I was glad to be able to erect one building in that style in London.*

The Hotel is now offices. But the splendid intertwining double staircase of ironwork survives (in the well of this there used to be a Turkish kiosk for coffee) and the huge Arthurian-style wall-papers are to be found here and there. The refreshment rooms have all been jazzed and only the station booking-hall remains as an untouched Scott interior. Alongside St. Pancras is the Midland goods station whose brickwork is undoubtedly the best in London. Sir Gilbert, like his grandson Sir Giles, was always interested in brick and stonework and for the goods station he had bricks specially made of varying sizes. You may see in the screen wall of the building (with its exquisite iron grilles) that the bricks grow smaller as they go higher, thus giving an effect of solidity to the wall. Of the exterior of the hotel I am myself enamoured. The clock tower has always seemed to me to be a highly picturesque outline and the rows of middle-pointed windows along the whole curving sweep achieve an effect of unity with diversity. As a practical plan for an hotel, the building is appalling. But as an exercise in scale and the skilful use of brick and stone it is unsurpassed in railway architecture. All other Midland stations in London are an anti-climax, as though the company had ruined itself on St. Pancras and had to be content with mere wooden sheds and brick booking-halls for the rest of the system. Fenchurch Street, which it took over from the London, Tilbury & Southend Railway, is a humbler affair more in the manner of—and but a few years later than—the Great Northern Railway terminus of King's Cross.

This building, which Ferguson describes as the more successful and pleasing “plainer sister” of St. Pancras is entirely the work of the engineer Joseph Cubitt. It was built in 1851, the material is white brick, glass and iron. The purpose at once is plain. One great semicircular archway is for departure, the other beside it is for arrival. Between them on the main front is appropriately placed a clock tower. A colonnade of brick arches

runs along the base of this front, between vast brick buttresses, and acts as a shelter for those awaiting their carriages. The booking-office is on the departure side of the building and opposite this is a crescent-shaped hotel, in a simple, white-brick-and-stone, classic style. Office buildings balance this on the arrival side of the station. The coherence of the design is now much hampered by an underground station and by shops which hide its truthful simplicity from the Euston Road. It is certainly the only London station which is pure railway architecture. I have always thought the new Underground stations (except that at Hammersmith) self-consciously simple in comparison with King's Cross. They are so much aware that they are in the "modern style", so tastefully arranged with red brick on the street level, and so streamlined that they smack more of the advertising agency than the railway.

King's Cross started no new style, except on different stations on its own line beyond London. The nearest approach to it, other than Fenchurch Street, is Liverpool Street, which was built in the 'seventies. It is a civil engineer's Gothic rather than architect's Gothic, and all the better for that. The Gothic-style iron pillars support many-vista-ed arcading, the flattened arch of the roof is crenelated on its own hanging edge and many mouldings and capitals in ironwork are to be found by the careful observer. Indeed on a foggy evening, when those pear-shaped arc lamps used to hang down low from the roof, casting a purplish-white light, Liverpool Street had quite a resemblance to an ancient abbey.

The last large station to be built in London in the nineteenth century was Marylebone (1899) for the Great Central Railway. Its buildings are of hard pink Midland brick with yellow terra-cotta dressings, all in Flemish Renaissance style. They look like a public library from Nottingham which has unexpectedly found itself in London. A beautiful description of this station and of the Great Central Railway is to be found in



Mr. Hamilton Ellis's book, *The Trains in London*. The weakness of the Great Central for gorgeous decorations in its carriages did not extend to stations, but its luxury is commemorated in Colonel Edis's Great Central Hotel, in the Marylebone Road. This entirely dwarfs the quiet terminus he designed behind it.

There is no doubt that Marylebone set a new tone to London railway architecture. Henceforward something more tasteful than the flimsy wooden constructions was considered suitable for suburban stations. The L. & N.W.R. employed the noted domestic architect Gerald Horsley in 1901 to design stations at Harrow and Pinner in a style halfway between that of a bank and a medium-sized country house. Harrow, with its tower, was remarkably successful. Termini were thought to be ornate in the wrong sort of way, too like the Louvre and not



enough like Michelangelo. So there were the great rebuildings in an Edwardian monumental Renaissance manner starting with the London Brighton & South Coast in 1908 at Victoria. The most ponderous effort of all was Waterloo with its twenty-three platforms and vast, useless entrance arch approached by flights of steps and, unlike Euston, symbolical of nothing. Baker Street by Charles W. Clarke was a quieter rebuilding for the Metropolitan Railway in the neo-Georgian style (1914). Its refreshment rooms are still untouched. The most charming of all the Edwardian and neo-Georgian Renaissance stations is the entrance to Charing Cross Underground by H. W. Ford (1913). Marble columns in restaurants, stained glass, thick and crinkly, and adorned with wreaths, Turkey carpets, bronze or beaten copper electroliers, mahogany screens with panels of bevelled glass, plasterwork in the Baroque manner, external sculpture in the manner of Sir Hamo Thorneycroft as at Waterloo—all these are characteristic of the last age of railway architecture. Redecorations in this manner went on in nearly every station. The hotel at Liverpool Street sustained such refittings and even at the St. Pancras Hotel a dining-room was redecorated in a "Georgian" style.

Such is the stylistic development of the London railways until the dismal grouping and the even more dismal eclipse of all individuality which has occurred since nationalisation. But just as, in a church, architecture is not so important as the worship which goes on there, so in railways the association of a station and of a line are part of its beauty. The personality of most stations survives in London, even through British Railways, and will continue to do so, until everyone in England is exactly the same as everyone else.

Waterloo is the services' and racegoers' station—"Pompey" (Portsmouth), "Soton" (Southampton), Aldershot, Epsom, Ascot. It has a rather high-class suburban connection. Civil Servants who have reached C.M.G. and knighthood stage find

it near to Whitehall and convenient for Esher and in pine-clad Southern Electric suburbs their wives play bridge with those of rich city gentlemen. The humbler Civil Servant uses the Metropolitan, and moves outwards to Rickmansworth and Northwood as his salary increases. He probably knows he is not going to reach the heights of Esher Civil Servants and there is no point in establishing a railway-carriage connection on the Southern Electric. The commercial people who use the Metropolitan are in their turn slightly less rich than the City gentlemen who use Waterloo.

The richest and flashiest of all suburban travellers are, of course, those who travel daily from Victoria by first-class Pullman trains to Brighton. Indeed Brighton so dominates Victoria station that though Continental trains depart from its South-Eastern Section, though many of the inner London suburbs are served by puzzling loop lines which start here and end at London Bridge, Victoria is a station of what moneyed leisure is left in London. Though it is meant to be associated with the South Coast and summer holidays, the sea is not what one associates with those who use it regularly. They do not look as though they took a winter dip in the English Channel. Warm flats, many drinks, pontoon, rummy and poker seem to be more in their line.

What a contrast is Liverpool Street! Here those extraordinarily cramped and uncomfortable Great Eastern carriages are drawn out above the East End housetops to wide acres of Essex suburb, two-storey houses, flat recreation grounds, strange chapels of strange sects, the well-trodden commons on the fringes of Epping Forest. Here workmen's trains run early in the morning. Here the old London sulphur smell pervades and even red bricks receive a black coating. Dense streets of Tottenham, Wanstead, Leytonstone, Barking, Edmonton, you are the real London and you form a barrier between the town and the unspoiled country of East Anglia! So many trains

carry your patient passengers in and out of the black cathedral of Liverpool Street, that expresses to Harwich, Yarmouth and Norwich seem slow at starting and ending for fear, no doubt, of knocking into one of these hundreds of suburban steam trains. Fenchurch Street has the same quality as Liverpool Street and so has London Bridge.

Charing Cross is the railway's concession to the Continent. Though it is possible to leave Charing Cross for Kent, the impression travellers like to give when they use Charing Cross is that they are going abroad. Little Bureaux de Change at the entrance encourage the impression and Edward Middleton Barry's elaborate Eleanor Cross, befouled by pigeons in the station yard, reminds us once more of one of Europe's shining gifts to England, Eleanor of Castile.

I do not know what to say of Cannon Street. Of all the stations of London, it is my favourite, so echoing, so lofty and so sad. Whoever used it and who uses it now? Holborn Viaduct was the great station for hop-pickers on their journey to Kent. But Cannon Street is too stately for that sort of thing. It is much less important than London Bridge, at which most of its trains stop. Perhaps the people of Bromley, that lonely high-class suburb in Kent, love Cannon Street as I do.

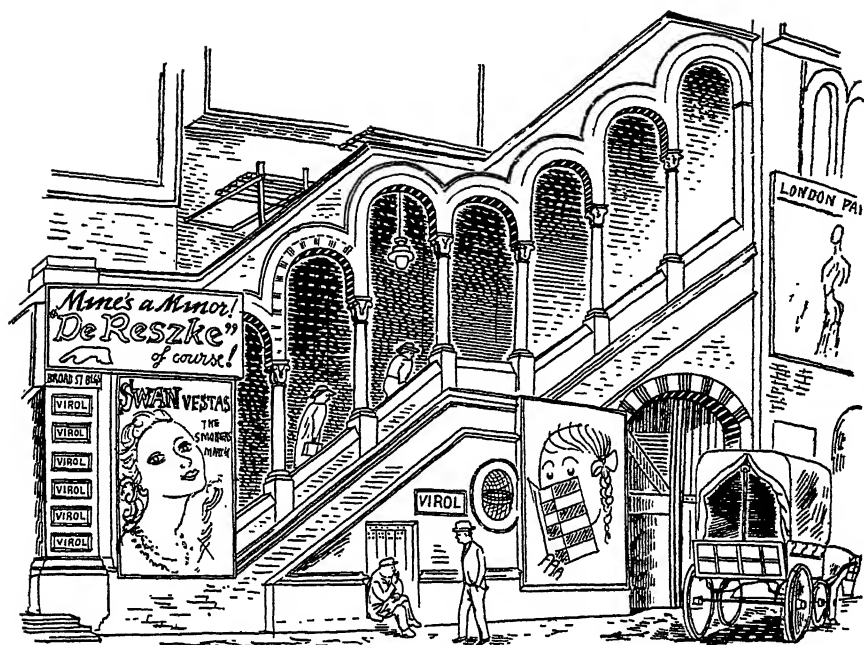
There is one station, however, which hardly anyone uses at all—Broad Street, which is given over to ghosts of frock-coated citizens who once crowded the old North London trains from the steam suburbs of Highbury, Canonbury, and Camden Town. Often do these sumptuous L.M.S. electric trains swing across the North London suburbs on that smooth, useless, beautiful journey to Richmond. At no time of day have I known it impossible to find a seat in their spacious carriages. And the frock-coated ones are dead and gone like the rolling-stock which carried them, their houses have been turned into flats, their gardens built over by factories. The North London was the last line to use wooden-seated third-class carriages as

it did on its Poplar branch (now closed), the last line in London to run no trains during Church time on a Sunday morning, and within living memory the General Manager of the line refused to allow Smith's bookstall on Broad Street to sell any vulgar-looking papers. Still the trains run, through haunted gas-lit stations, on the most revealing journey London can provide.

The main-line platforms of King's Cross are all expresses and Civil Servants bagging the first-class sleepers to Scotland, their fares paid for them out of our taxes. I do not like it, despite its noble architecture. It is a station, like Euston, that those few of us who are not Civil Servants will associate with injustice. But those dim suburban platforms at King's Cross, to which trains come puffing up from the inner circle, are still Victorian London. Here runs much uncomfortable rolling-stock to Barnet and Hatfield, climbing slowly to Finsbury Park. All the money is spent on stream-lining those L.N.E.R. expresses in the main station.

St. Pancras is a station apart, a Royal Station. The old idea that the Midland was the most comfortable railway in the world still holds good despite the strenuous efforts of the L.M.S. to kill it. There is a suburban service, but it is of no importance. I have the impression that St. Pancras is still the aristocratic route to Scotland. Gun-cases and fishing rods go north with tweed-clad lairds, salmon and game returning in the guard's van without them. I have little doubt that British Railways will do away with St. Pancras altogether. It is too beautiful and too romantic to survive. It is not of this age. Euston has stolen its trains but not its atmosphere. Except for that concealed platform where the Irish mail leaves of an evening, there is no personality left about the trains from Euston. To the Irish, Euston is the chief of English stations.

Except for Broad Street, Marylebone is the quietest station. Only two expresses leave it a day, the "South Yorkshireman"

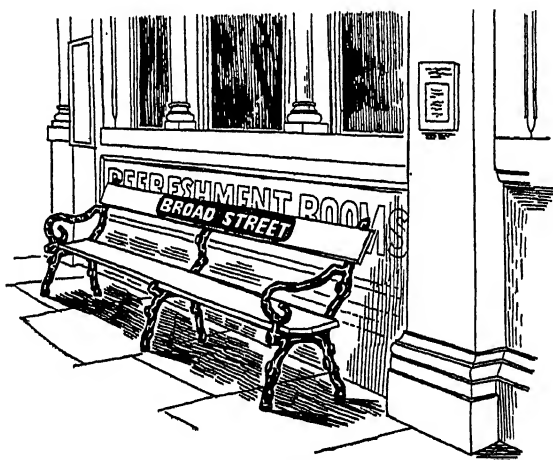


and the "Master Cutler". There is hardly room for more and the suburban service to Buckinghamshire seems like an afterthought. I have never met anyone who has used one of the Marylebone expresses, but lately I had the pleasure of coming into Marylebone on a semi-express which stopped at Brackley. We rushed through late Victorian cuttings and under bridges of glazed brick nearly merged with the Metropolitan. When I reached London I found I was one of fifteen passengers.

Paddington has the strongest personality of all the larger London stations. Its passengers are nearly all country people. There is the one exception, a large contingent of South Welsh who seem always to be travelling in trains. There is a lessening section of old-fashioned people, too poor now to travel first, who come up on the cheap day fares from Wiltshire and

Gloucestershire to visit the Army and Navy Stores. Relations from further west stay a night or two at the Paddington Hotel. There are some Oxford dons and at holiday times more school-boys than on any other line. Add to them a final section of commuters who have transformed Newbury and Maidenhead, Reading and Henley into suburbs of London.

I am aware of how sketchy this attempt at the atmosphere of London stations is. Sketchy and no doubt unfair, for there must be many to whom King's Cross and Euston are charming places and others who detest Cannon Street, St. Pancras and Liverpool Street as I do not. To them I apologise, but if I have caused them to think of these stations as places with the strong personality that only those who use them can know, I will have achieved my object. To me they are people and people have sides to their character they reveal to some and not to others.



WESTMINSTER AND WHITEHALL

If there is any part of any city which should stimulate reflection about the spirit of place, that *genius loci* venerated by the ancient Romans, then surely there is much within the mile that separates the Houses of Parliament in Westminster and the Law Courts in the Strand which should deeply stir the thoughts of men.

For here has been created, slowly, patiently and persistently through the centuries, that force which, however mysterious in its essence, yet stands revealed in its achievements: His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. How it began, how it was reshaped nearly nine hundred years ago by a foreign conqueror and his descendants, what struggles their successors had with the nobles of their court and later with the people of England, and how, after many years, new working arrangements made at first with a few grew into understandings about the nature, the purpose and the methods of government widely shared by the people as a whole; all this is a story told in every book which treats of the history of the British nation.

Could we read national character aright we should surely find in this story the clue to one of the secrets which help to explain the position which the English have won for themselves in the world. That secret, as we must always remember, never excited more curiosity than after the summer of 1940 when this country disproved the fears of many among its best friends, who thought that within a few months at most the inhabitants of the British Isles would be conquered once more with those of the rest of Western Europe.

Obviously it takes more than a government, however resolute, to prevent a great nation from being overwhelmed by invasion.

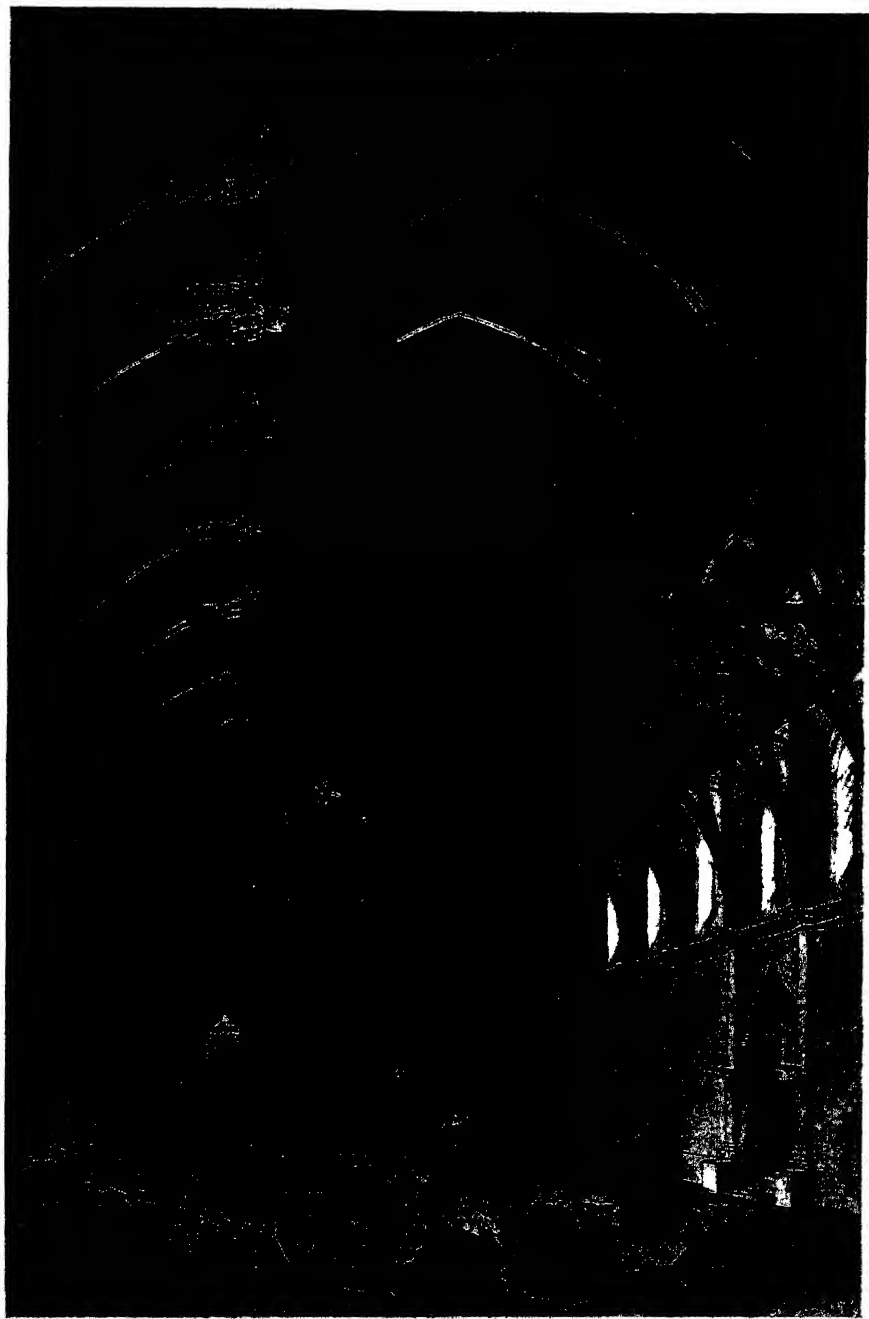


But everyone who believes that the government itself is some index of the strength and quality of a people will look with a questioning eye upon the venerable stones of Whitehall and Westminster, will peer into the many public buildings in which His Majesty's Government is carried on and will hope to carry away some clearer and more concrete ideas about one at least of the secrets of Britain's strength.

First there is the position of the King, or of the Crown, in the work of government. Many are the outward signs of the reality of the direct royal connection with government. To take a small example which anyone can see for himself, there are the entwined initials V.R. or E.R. or G.R. included in the design of pillar-boxes, doorways, porticoes, even drainpipes. They denote the reigning monarch at the time of their construction: Victoria Regina, Edwardus Rex, Georgius Rex. Again, "On His Majesty's Service" is the legend printed on millions of envelopes carrying letters every day from government offices. All this is a reminder that the British Government is His Majesty's Government. It is undertaken by His Majesty's Ministers and by British Civil Servants who, like the members of the Army, Navy and Air Force, are all servants of their Commander-in-Chief, His Majesty the King.

The strong hold which the Crown has, not merely upon the affections of the British people but also upon their political thinking, may seem all the more difficult to understand when it is realised how greatly the political power and authority of the King has been reduced. Three hundred years have passed since, on the 30th January, 1649, King Charles I was beheaded before a vast London crowd in this same historic Whitehall. What is generally believed to be the site of the scaffold is commemorated by a tablet over one of the windows of the old Banqueting Hall on the south side of Whitehall.

This building alone survives of that old Palace of Whitehall which was completely destroyed by fire in 1698. Picturesque,



*Westminster Hall in 1809*



*Westminster Abbey in 1812*

rambling and magnificent in an old small-scale medieval way, it was an intimate part of seventeenth-century Stuart England; for there resided the real ruler of the country, the King. But by the end of the seventeenth century, the representatives of the people of England in the House of Commons had proved that their control of national revenue had given them control over the executive arm of government also. Those who paid the piper learned in time to call the tune. They had done more. Without destroying the kingly office or its dignity, they had effectively subordinated it to a new power. That power was not only their own determination to control policy, strong as their ambitions could sometimes be; it was a victory for the idea that abstract law is an authority which kings themselves must respect. Cicero had learned this principle from Aristotle and Plato, but in the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance the lesson they had taught so well had been neglected. The English had to learn it, as they have learned other lessons, in the hard school of practical life. But they learned it well and, just as the government of Westminster and Whitehall has the common quality of being His Majesty's Government, so it shares the quality of being government under the rule of law. It is not a government of an autocrat or dictator, of a gang, or of a disciplined ruthless minority party constraining obedience by secret police, terrorism and murder.

Indeed, anyone who expects while in London to visit the buildings in which the rulers of England reside will be disappointed. The government of the country, it is true, is carried on in the King's name but not in all its infinite detail by the King in person. So there is no omnipotent ruler of the United Kingdom in Buckingham Palace. Neither does the Prime Minister in his modest official residence, Number 10 Downing Street, opposite the Foreign Office, qualify for such a title, for he is surrounded by his colleagues in the Cabinet. This is the chief executive committee of the political party able to command

a majority in the House of Commons. Its decisions are collective decisions for which all its members assume joint responsibility and furthermore it depends for its authority upon its ability to count upon Parliamentary approval for all its actions.

Justice and police, together with taxation and the maintenance of an army, are among the earliest of the powers of kings and states. Many centuries of slow development were, however, required before all the various functions now carried on in Whitehall were sorted out and assigned each to their several and proper authorities. There are still important survivals, of which the activity of the House of Lords as the Supreme Court of Appeal is one of the most impressive. The business of the Law Courts, however, lies elsewhere than in Westminster and Whitehall. His Majesty's Justices sit in their traditional legal garb on the judicial "Bench" in the Law Courts, just outside the old boundary of the City of London marked by the site of Temple Bar.

Whitehall is another world, but the position of His Majesty's Civil Servants and the Ministers of the Crown they directly serve, located as it is between Parliament on the one side and the Law Courts on the other, symbolises their subordination to the law-makers in Parliament and to the law-givers in the Courts. Here are to be found the old traditional government departments, still thought of as making up the main strength of the executive arm of government: the Treasury, the War Office, the Admiralty, the Foreign Office, the Home Office, and the Board of Trade (at present—1949—in temporary quarters in Millbank) and many more.

The twentieth century has seen by far the most spectacular increase in the number of government offices and of Civil Servants. "Whitehall" employs about a million of them but about a quarter of this number are in the postal service. Very many of them work in new departments, such as the Ministry of National Insurance, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of

Health and the Ministry of Food, which help to organise and administer the enormous and complicated business of the new social services which have grown out of the modern policy of trying to shield all citizens from the worst results of unemployment, ill-health and malnutrition.

Two world wars within one generation have powerfully forced along the social revolution. Its very modest beginnings, apart from the Poor Laws which Queen Elizabeth authorised in the sixteenth century, do not long antedate the reign of Queen Victoria, but its consequences for the private lives of the inhabitants of the United Kingdom are of far greater significance than those of any other of the revolutions recorded in their history, and it is still too early to foresee what all its long-term effects may be.

It is also, very understandably, a revolution which has brought problems in government and public administration of far greater complexity than those confronting the statesmen and Civil Servants of the nineteenth century. State revenues then, for instance, came mainly from customs dues, excise and stamp duties on legal documents and certificates, supplemented by smaller but growing receipts from income tax and death duties. A large proportion of the money raised by taxation in this way went to pay interest on the National Debt, so providing an income for thousands of prudent British families who had put their savings into that safest investment of all, British "Consols". National taxation was not then the serious factor in the budget of middle- and upper-class citizens who now not merely have to shoulder the burdens caused by the ravages, devastation and destruction of two vast and shattering wars, but must also assume a very large share of the cost of that large part of the social services not met by the contributions of those benefiting from them. The principal beneficiaries are, of course, the working-class members of society, who are by far the most numerous and usually the poorest. In the nineteenth century,

at least in the latter half of it, they paid little or nothing in direct taxation and the indirect taxation collected upon the cost of the beer they drank and the tobacco they smoked was, in comparison with its present high level, almost negligible.

The central features of the British system of Parliamentary government remain unchanged. The government of the day, the government "in office", is formed by the leaders of the political party possessing a majority of elected members over any other party in the House of Commons. They sit on the Front Bench in the House confronted across the Table of the House by the leaders of the minority party who form His Majesty's Opposition. Here the great good fortune of the British in inheriting a rectangular instead of a hemicyclical design for the seating of their Members of Parliament deserves a note. It has powerfully reinforced the two-party system and has helped to arrest the tendency, which might otherwise arise, for nuances in political ideology to embarrass action by creating fragmentary groups and an unstable equilibrium in the voting strength of parties. To "cross the Floor" and to sit with the Government or Opposition is a very much more serious step than to edge one's way a little bit more to the right or to the left. It is not, of course, a complete determinant of party structure but it is an influence worth noting. It undoubtedly results from the tradition set when the House used to meet in St. Stephen's Chapel, as it did in the sixteenth century in the reign of Edward VI.

The majority-party leaders in the House of Commons, as Ministers of the Crown and members of the Cabinet, take charge of important government departments and so assume responsibility not only to the House of Commons but to the British elector for all the activities of the permanent Civil Servants. These are described as "permanent" because they do not lose their jobs if the Government is defeated and is replaced by the Opposition. The "spoils system", which gives a victorious political party the

power to change all Civil Servants, ambassadors and other public servants, is unknown in England, thanks to the fact that they are servants of the King who represents Government above Party.

Many advantages flow from this fact that the permanent executive machinery of the government of the United Kingdom survives unchanged the varying fortunes of the political Parliamentary Legislature which, however, directs it and answers for its conduct to the people in Parliament. A flexible instrument has been fashioned, free from many of the rigidities imposed by a written constitution and free also from the harassing operation of checks and balances that might result if deliberate efforts were made to give equal power and authority to the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. A balance there must be, but as things are it is achieved by working arrangements rather than by the observance of written rules. In practice it seems as though a kind of pre-established, self-created harmony has arisen in Great Britain between Parliament and the Civil Service under the rule of law. In the House of Commons, it is true, laws can be made and unmade; nevertheless the Rule of Law is respected there as the constant deference of Members to their impartial Speaker, and the ceremony by which he is attended, convincingly symbolise. A very large part of the duties of the Civil Service, or the Executive, is to administer the law, and every large department has its staff of legal experts to interpret and advise, not merely upon the Statute Law but also upon the Case Law based upon precedent and made, as so much British Law has been made, by the decisions of Judges, or the Judiciary, upon disputed points of law in the Courts.

But what of that inner relationship which exists between Westminster and Whitehall, between the authority of Parliament and the power of the Executive? What are the relations of each, separately and in combination with each other, to the subjects of their power, namely the people as a whole?



Parliament we can see plainly. Its impressive buildings, the hereditary Peers in the Upper House or House of Lords, the 640 members of the House of Commons proudly adding after their names the two initials "M.P." to signify "Member of Parliament"; its law-making procedure of first, second and third readings of Bills, as the drafts of new Acts of Parliament are called; its process of debate on public questions; its harrying of Ministers on the Front Bench of the House of Commons with hundreds of searching questions every day upon public affairs, government policy and the conduct of departments; its ancient forms of procedure, its ritual, its morning prayers; its time-honoured Officers, the Speaker, the Clerk, the Serjeant-at-Arms and Black Rod; all these are survivals from a remote past, like the Woolsack on which the Lord Chancellor sits in the House of Lords. Some of these outward shows and manifestations, odd and strange as they may seem, are yet so much part and parcel of the whole fabric of life in the ordered society which is the creation of the English people, that it would be senseless iconoclasm to abolish them in the pretence that business would be more efficiently conducted without them. It would be equally odd to expect that they could be transplanted to flourish in other countries where British influence and tradition are unknown. Nevertheless beneath such survivals of the good manners and the pageantry of former ages our politicians get firmly to grips with the real problems of government.

In that task, as we all know, Ministers, with the approval of their Parliamentary majority, decide the broad lines of policy which His Majesty's Government will follow, and they then order the Civil Servants to make these decisions effective. It is the Ministers and not the Civil Servants who are responsible to the country for the success or failure of such policies. It is the Cabinet and not the members of the Civil Service which goes if the majority of the members of the House of Commons are so dissatisfied that they vote against the Cabinet policy on a

question of major importance. When that happens Parliament is dissolved by the King on the advice of the defeated Prime Minister, and a general election is held which may either confirm the former policy or so alter the balance of party strength in the House of Commons that a new majority leader is summoned by the King and asked to form a Government. If he succeeds a new Cabinet is placed in office. A general election automatically occurs after every five years' life of a Parliament.

Many members of the public and of the House of Commons may, of course, become considerably dissatisfied with the activities of the Government and the Civil Service without wishing to go to the length of provoking a general election. What opportunities are there then to bring about a change? How can Whitehall be brought to mend its ways without upsetting the whole business undertaken at Westminster? The first influence likely to lead to some change in response to well-merited criticism will be the knowledge of the senior Civil Servants concerned that they are the objects of strong criticism. For Civil Servants are not a class apart; they mix with their fellow citizens as neighbours, as members of clubs, and of course they read the newspapers. There is, therefore, always a powerful influence within government departments tending to make their policies conform to public opinion. Where this does not, or perhaps cannot, operate (because opinion in the country may be genuinely divided), other influences begin to operate.

One of the most important is provided by the daily battery of questions addressed to Ministers in the House of Commons on every aspect of national affairs, and often about the private affairs of citizens aggrieved by some government action. Many, but not all, of these questions will contain or imply some criticism of government departments, who are thereby called upon to justify their actions before a tribunal about whose opinions Ministers are naturally very sensitive. For the questions are public. They are made before a critical audience, a large part

of which is bending its efforts to defeat the Cabinet so that they can themselves replace it. The questions and answers are also likely to be reported in the newspapers and so to influence public opinion in the country as a whole—opinion on which, of course, the votes in the next general election depend.

Parliamentary questions by no means exhaust the means of controlling the Government possessed by the House of Commons. The subject-matter of the question may be blown up into a full-scale debate upon the work of any government department, which can easily develop into an issue of critical importance. A more detailed enquiry of the type Americans call a “probe” may be undertaken by a Select Committee of the House of Commons with wide powers to enquire and report. Two such Committees are regularly appointed each year and have proved very powerful influences in establishing adequate principles for the conduct of public business, particularly where the spending of public money is involved. These are the Select Committee on Estimates which examines proposals for expenditure submitted by government departments, and the Select Committee on Public Accounts, which looks into the way money has actually been spent. During the last war a new Select Committee, on National Expenditure, was added to these two.

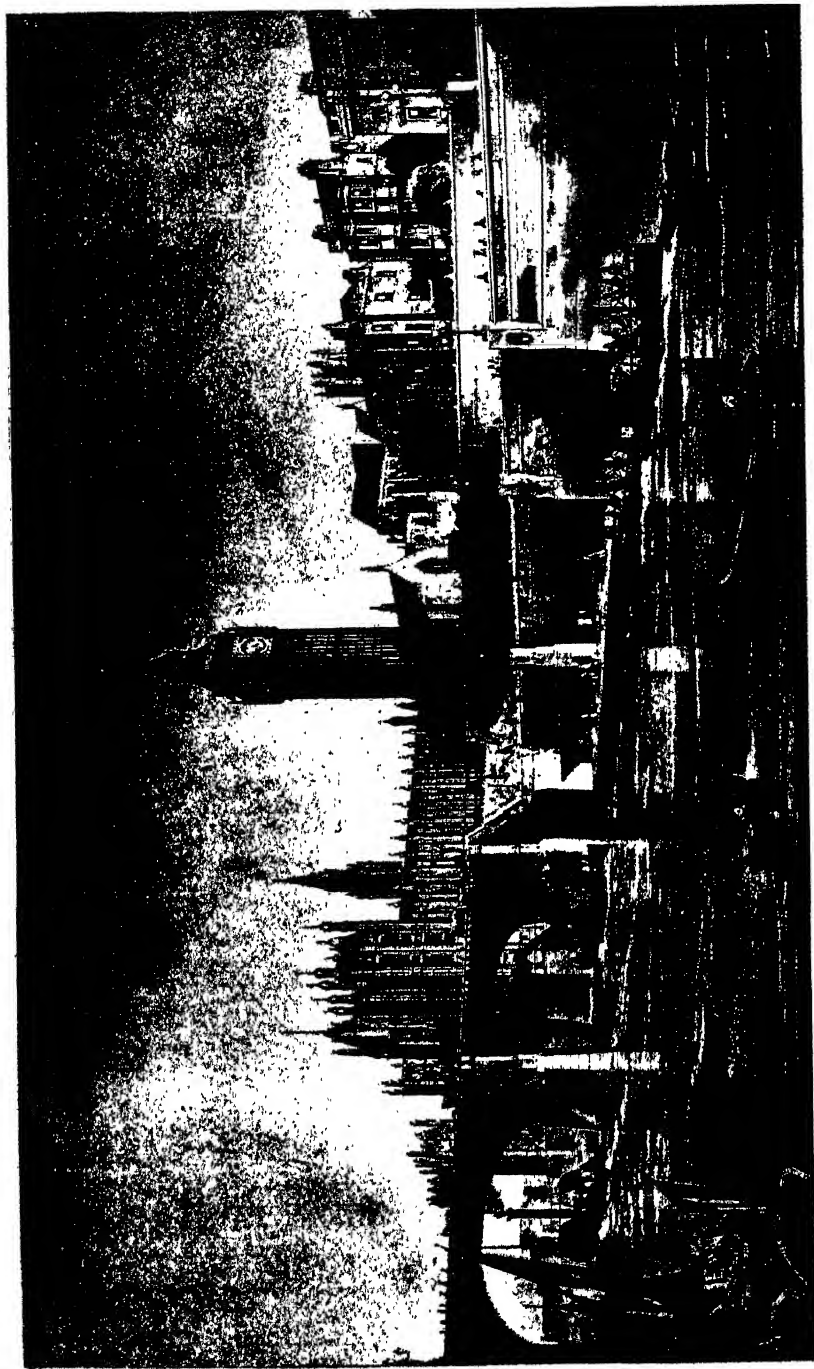
The important thing about the work of these committees is that they interrogate not the Ministers of the Crown responsible for the departments into whose work they are enquiring but the Civil Servants themselves who actually do the work. Here is a direct link between Westminster and Whitehall, between the Legislature and the Executive, supplementing that Parliamentary link provided by the presence in the House of Commons of nearly all the Members of the Cabinet and most of those other Ministers whose departmental work is not thought of sufficient importance to give them a seat in the Cabinet—that central committee or board of government by which major political decisions are taken.



*Eighteenth - century view of Whitehall*



*The Houses of Parliament before the Fire of 1834*



*The House of Commons and Westminster Bridge in 1864*

The House of Lords will also contain some Ministers and Members of the Cabinet but it has not developed the same machinery of investigation and enquiry, for the very good reason no doubt that the last word on money matters does not rest with the Peers but with Members of the House of Commons.

The links between Westminster and Whitehall in the shaping and control of the executive administration do not stop with the work of Select Committees, or with Parliamentary questions. The Government of the day may set up a Royal Commission to investigate some important national questions such as unemployment insurance, national health insurance, population or the press. These Royal Commissions, like the House of Commons Committees, will usually contain a balance of the political interests concerned, but unlike the Parliamentary Committees they will not consist solely of members of the House of Commons. They have equal powers, however, to summon Civil Servants before them and the Civil Service invariably provides the secretary, a further difference between them and the Parliamentary Committees whose secretarial work is done by the staff of Parliament itself.

Apart from any question of assigning praise or blame, or of controlling or directing, these Committees and Commissions have the great merit of being fact-finding and reflective bodies. Royal Commissions especially aid in this way, for their members are usually some of the first authorities in the country on the particular subject concerned. Their reports are unrivalled sources of knowledge and advice to help those who have the great responsibility of making policy upon the major questions of the day. They are advisory bodies and it does not follow that their advice will always be taken. But it is there on record, and of its value there can be no doubt. Students of public affairs can turn, and for generations now have turned, to the reports of such Committees and Commissions as the most valuable source of information they can get on the actual operations of govern-

ment. Fortunately a valuable precedent was set at the very beginning of the nineteenth century by the Houses of Parliament ordering not merely that their Select Committees' Reports should be printed, but that they should also be accompanied by a full record of the questions and answers and the evidence on which they were based. When Royal Commissions began to be appointed in increasing numbers in the reign of Queen Victoria, the same practice was adopted, so that on almost every subject of major, and many of minor, importance and political interest, there is a wealth of official informative literature. All these reports are sold to the public by H.M. Stationery Office, the official Government printing and publishing organisation which has a bookshop of its own in London, in Kingsway.

Such, in broad outline, are the chief links between Westminster and Whitehall in the joint endeavour of Legislature and Executive to carry on the great work of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. No short account can pretend to be adequate. More than mere words or length of exposition is involved in the search for the reality behind the forms. So much depends upon tradition, upon the momentum of established practice, upon tacit understandings, in short, upon a way of life—the British way. The secret of the strength and success of British Parliamentary democracy is not, therefore, to be revealed to those who are content merely to gaze upon the buildings in which Parliament and government departments operate. It is unlikely to emerge from a contemplation of forms of procedure or of ceremonies. It is not possible to distil it into a set of formulæ, precedents or precepts because it is, in essence, the outcome of a long endeavour that has been pursued by the English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish in partnership together over many centuries.

PALACES AND PARKS

**T**he major parks of London are royal pleasure and hunting-grounds which have become public resorts through gradual stages. They may be rightly described as the magnificent gifts of Sovereigns to the people, an historical development of park usage not peculiar to England, and, contrary to popular belief, not truly connected with the growth of democracy. On the contrary, the development comes more from habits of ostentation. Privacy is a highly sophisticated taste. The Kings of the past were rarely, if ever, alone, and do not seem to have wanted to be: they liked being seen by persons of every station.

So far as one can tell from records it was never very difficult, before the eighteenth century, to enter Kensington Gardens, Hyde Park, or the two parks about St. James's, or to remain there—provided one did not offend the game laws, in which case one was possibly hanged. There was no specific act of giving, but a gradual effortless establishment of custom.

So we find that the classic London feature of this kind is a park and a royal palace close together. The rule is broken at either end of English history. In modern times we find the park growing quite independently of the palace under the care of county councils, while, if we peer into the distant past, we find old palaces, such as Westminster, the Tower, and Whitehall, which have lost what small pleasure-grounds they had, through the growth of cities. Let us begin with these antiquities.

The oldest palace is Westminster, and it can still be seen operated as such at State openings of Parliament. At that august ceremony the King conducts business with his counsellors in the same place, and with some of the same ceremonial,



as did his Saxon predecessors. When people grow more delicate in their ways they tend to divide business from private life; they cease to live over the shop and get a house in the suburbs. This is precisely what happened with our Kings when they left Westminster for the fresh air of St. James's, Kensington, Hampton or Windsor, though, as befits the complicated progress of dynasties, no definite act has been made to distinguish Westminster from other royal properties. Kings often resided there up to the time of Henry VIII, and up to the time of William IV the Sovereign entertained in Westminster Hall after his coronation. George IV's banquet has been described as the last royal merry-making in this palace, but there have been later ones, notably the dinner given by Edward VIII to holders of the Victoria Cross.

Westminster remains a palace, and should a reigning sovereign decide to dwell there with his family (and the view of the river is charming) it is difficult to see what could stop him, gravely as such a whim might violate the spirit of constitutional rule. Strangely enough, this situation, though it has not arisen in modern times, is not so far from reality as might appear. When the old palace was burnt down in 1834, William IV was prepared to give Parliament a new home in Buckingham Palace. Had Parliament accepted, as it nearly did, Queen Victoria might well have found herself in conflict with her Lords and Commons because they had occupied the only royal residence in London convenient for a Sovereign with a large family, and designed with that object in view. (It is curious to remember that William IV's offer was finally refused on the advice of the Duke of Wellington who disapproved of Parliament being situated where the mob could surround it on four sides.)

The other very ancient royal palace is the Tower of London. People usually consider this as the oldest of all, but popular belief in a Roman origin is only supported by the fact that the Roman wall passed through this area. Almost certainly the

original "tower" was that built by William I (possibly on the site of a Saxon fort), and although this strange and fascinating building has been a royal palace from his time onwards, it has for the most part been such in a purely technical sense, unlike Westminster. Few Kings have lived there from choice, none has made it his principal residence. It is the least changed of English establishments. It remains, even in detail, what it has been for nearly nine hundred years: a treasury and keep manned by the King's personal troops, a military post and a state prison, commanded under the King's direct orders, as the daily ceremony of the keys dramatically emphasises. The last King to inhabit the Tower was Charles II who passed one night here before his coronation on the following day.

Until recent times the Sovereign was often on bad terms with the City of London and for that reason avoided passing through it if he could. Hence this reluctance of Kings to live in the Tower, because the City lies between it and the King's place of business at Westminster. For the same reason, probably, the former royal residence at Greenwich (which town still has a notable royal park) was little used, and was abandoned in the seventeenth century. We need to go back to Westminster to understand the geographical character of the other London palaces, all of which lie on the western side and all of which were selected with an eye to a convenient approach to St. Stephen's, Westminster.

Whitehall and St. James's were obtained by Henry VIII at about the same time. Both were in origin religious property. St. James's was a hospital for "maidens that were leprous", and was bought by Henry in exchange for lands. Whitehall, formerly called York House, was the town residence of the Archbishops of York, having been owned by them since the thirteenth century. It was thus Wolsey's at the time of his fall, and that melancholy event prompted Henry to transfer the property of the see to the throne in a manner hitherto untried by



*Hampton Court Palace*

that brilliant monarch. York House was henceforth known by its present name of Whitehall.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Whitehall was the great London palace, and to appreciate this fact it should be remembered that the Banqueting Hall is the only remaining fragment of a large complex of buildings, mostly Tudor, which once occupied a large area on the riverside. Several magnificent plans were considered in Stuart times for making of Whitehall an English Tuileries and Louvre, but nothing came of them, and as the dream of Grand Monarchy faded in England they ceased to be needful or fitting.

Then the entire palace, with the exception of the Banqueting Hall, was burnt down in 1698, after which it was never again used as a dwelling, or rebuilt. The hall served as an unconsecrated church for nearly two hundred years, until it was presented to the Royal United Service Institution by the Queen in 1891, and by that act she brought the long royal history of Whitehall to an end. It is now the United Service Museum.

St. James's has had a less violent and more consistent history, and still keeps its grounds. Let us first consider the latter. As anyone might guess from the map the two parks which half surround the little palace were originally one, and included a sizeable part of what are now the gardens of Buckingham Palace. Henry VIII, having bought them from the leprous maidens, or seized them from the Abbot of Westminster (there is some difference among the authorities), drained the marsh, enclosed the whole area, and introduced deer, joining this park to the "Royal Chase" which, in the sixteenth century, stretched from Westminster to Highgate. Then, after his time, not much was done to St. James's Park till Charles II invited Le Nôtre to redesign it. Of what he did little remains beyond the former chain of pools composing now a single tract of water, and the straight lines of the Mall and Birdcage Walk.

The present appearance of St. James's Park is mostly due to Nash who remade these grounds in the reign of George IV, and though we may regret Le Nôtre, we must allow that the results of the later work are admirable. Nash's romantic style is peculiarly fitting to the collection of waterfowl which has been kept here since the time of the Stuarts. From the mid-Victorian suspension bridge two great views can be seen: on one side Buckingham Palace on an elevation: on the other the Horse Guards, the War Office and Whitehall Court, rising in a distant mass and conveying an impression, not anticipated by any architect, of some fabulous Eastern city.

St. James's Palace, if not the most gorgeous, is certainly the most endearing of the royal palaces of England, retaining its old character although much of it is not antique but the result of careful restoration. Since the time of Henry VIII it has remained partly a residence, partly an official place of reception. In modern times no more striking picture of the ceremonial stiffness and informal openness of the old courts could be seen than when, in the days of King George V, the Foot Guards of the Household troops performed the elaborately impressive drill of changing the Guard while the heir to the throne walked out of Ambassadors' Court, near which he had his private apartments, acknowledging the sentry's salute with his raised hat, as he joined the throng of his future subjects in St. James's.

From the decline of Whitehall to the later part of Queen Victoria's reign St. James's Palace was the centre of royal life in London. Ladies and gentlemen were formally presented to the Sovereign here at "Drawing Rooms" and levees, until, as the Queen grew old, the "Drawing Rooms", for ladies, were held in Buckingham Palace, and henceforth known as "Courts", though the levees are still held here as of old.

Next door to St. James's, on the east side, stands Marlborough House, a royal palace since 1817, and at present the home of Queen Mary. It will for long be remembered by historians as

the London residence, for nearly forty years, of Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, before he came to the throne as Edward VII. From here he exerted an authority on fashionable society such as had not been experienced by that part of the nation for many years, not since the days of George IV, and as a consequence what was called the "Marlborough House Set" was regarded by the public with awe, disapproval, and admiration. But the truth of this interesting episode is not likely to be known except in fragments, for of the fashionable throng surrounding this remarkable prince none left a memorial of any deep interest, but instead numerous dull eulogies. History is the loser by this prudishness, and perhaps the throne too, for that splendid institution has maintained its influence, not only by its constitutional correctitude, but by being manned by vigorous and highly individual personalities.

There is one former palace on the other side of St. James's which is now known as Lancaster House. It was built by Benjamin Wyatt for Queen Victoria's uncle, the Duke of York, that strange prince who, in spite of a notoriously and unusually improper private life, a truly remarkable incompetence in the discharge of public business, and a habit of falling into irredeemable debt, fairly captured public affection, as his brothers never did—a fact witnessed by the tremendous column erected in gratitude for his anti-Catholic outbursts in the Lords. At his death the house was sold to the Duke of Sutherland. It was presented to the nation in 1913, by Lord Leverhulme.

We come now to the great London palace of the King, and the eventual successor to the glories of Whitehall.

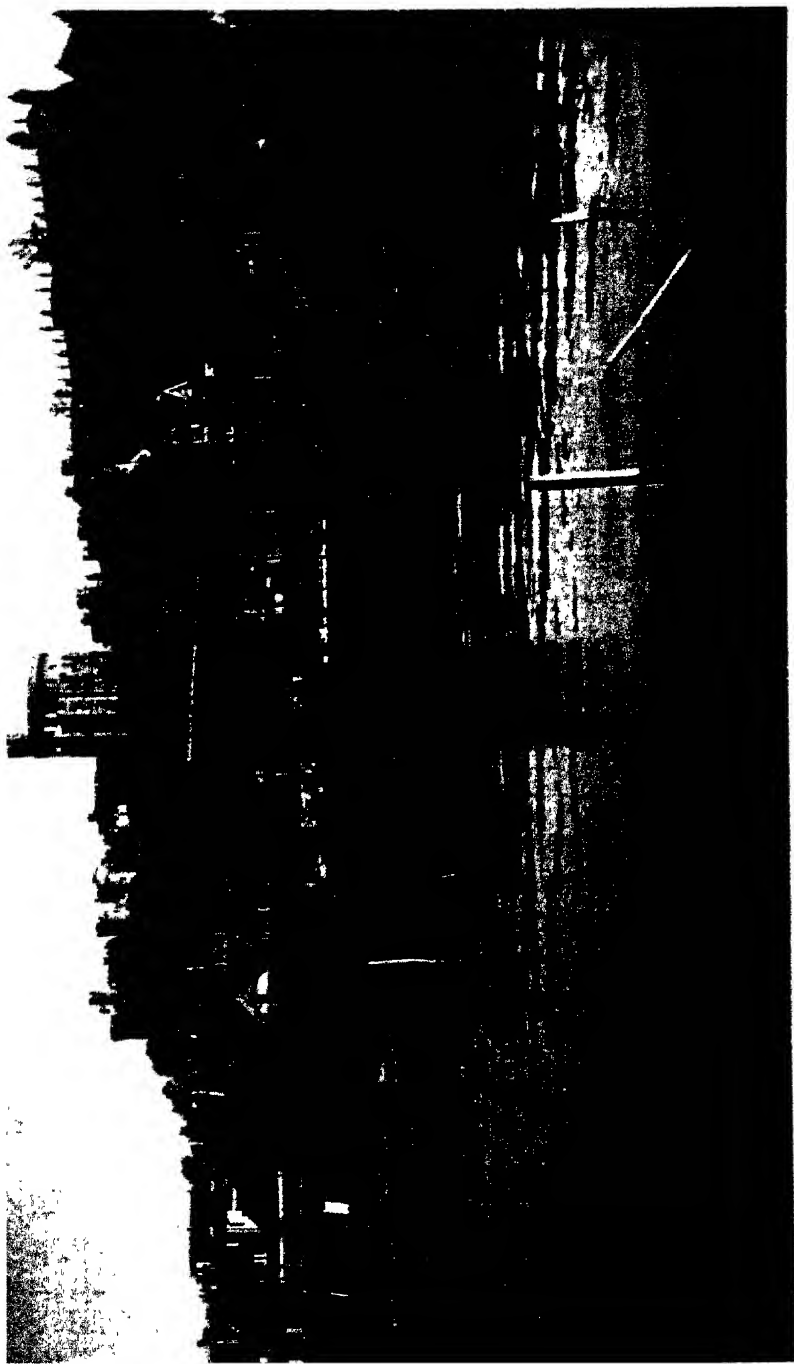
The original Buckingham House was built as the London palazzo of the Duke of that name in the eighteenth century. Old prints convey an impression of a dignified Queen Anne house, moderately large. It was bought in 1761 by George III, who moved here from St. James's. The famous meeting of the King and Dr. Johnson took place in the library. At this time

it was still known as Buckingham House, and then, from 1775, as the Queen's House.

It became what it is under George IV with that vast work of reconstruction which occupied Nash for eleven years from 1825. The result was the first great Buckingham Palace, which to the public view was different from what we see to-day, though all of it still stands. To appreciate the difference we must imagine St. James's and the Green Park coming right up to the present railings, and the palace with no east front. The three sides of the courtyard stand open. The two wings are joined by an iron palisade in whose centre stands Marble Arch as a ceremonial gateway.

So it remained for ten years, till 1846, when the Queen and Prince Albert opened a new period. Under their direction the first east front was built by James Blore, and Marble Arch carted away to its lonely exile in Tyburn, at the north-east corner of Hyde Park; the palace began to take on something of its present outside appearance. In the 'fifties the south wing and ballroom were added.

Buckingham Palace is one of the masterpieces of English architecture, and it is little recognised as the great building it is, because the east front, by which it is most known, has always been quite unworthy of the rest. It is somewhat the fashion today to deplore the disappearance of the Victorian east front, but few who remember it are likely to regret that it was pulled down. It was plain, coal-black, and looked very like the outside of a prison. But the present east front, built in 1912 by Sir Aston Webb, is little if any improvement on the old. It is heavy without being impressive, and far too coldly "official" for the most graceful scenes of public life. A great opportunity was lost in 1912, though when we recall the kind of architecture which abounded then, we may rejoice that the Sovereign has escaped so lightly. That is all one can say in praise. No one who sees the palace from the Mall would guess that on its other



*Windsor Castle*



side is one of the noblest late classical buildings in all England.

In our industrial age it is natural to spend some time bemoaning the contraction of the countryside, yet we should surely find solace in that from Whitehall to Notting Hill, a distance of three miles, there runs a chain of wide, beautiful parks through the very midst of a great modern capital. That this is so, is entirely due to the monarchy's wise conduct of its property. North of the Green Park we reach the entrance to the large rural area formed by the two parks of Hyde and Kensington which are only divided from one another by a road. Historically they are quite separate, however.

In Hyde Park we again note the rapacious hand of King Henry. This area had belonged to Westminster Abbey since the reign of St. Edward, and at the dissolution the King thoughtfully transferred it from the last abbot to himself. He immediately devoted it to the formation of a further hunting-ground in the Royal Chase. Such it remained till the Stuarts when, in the sixteen-thirties, we find it used for horse-racing, though the hunting continued for long after—indeed, for so long that the last recorded hunt in Hyde Park took place in the eighteenth century. We may wonder at these hunts in so small a space till we remember that in style they were different from, and very inferior to, the fast-moving open sport of today, which is a fairly modern form. They more closely resembled modern cub-hunting, that dismal pleasure, or forest-hunting as it is followed in some places in France today.

Hyde Park narrowly escaped extinction after the reign of Charles I, for under the Commonwealth it was broken up into private holdings. All these transactions were cancelled at the Restoration. Charles II, averting, we may suppose, his lovely eyes from any injustice hereby incurred, made Hyde Park something like what it remained till very recently, a place for military reviews and fashionable concourse. But, as we have seen, sporting tradition continued, and indeed may be said never to

have died, for though invitations to shoot in the Park are rare to-day, they are sometimes issued, when the duck and pigeon populations grow excessive and need to be reduced. The present Lord Hardwicke took part in an early morning duck shoot in Hyde Park twenty years ago.

But the most consistent tradition from Charles II's time to our own has been the parade of fashion. The following quotation recalls the scene:

"In the Drive are seen elegant equipages and high-bred horses in handsome trappings, moving continually to and fro, presided over by sleek coachmen and powdered lackeys, and occupied by some of the most beautiful and exquisitely dressed women in the world. In the Row are numerous riders who parade their spirited and glossy steeds before the admiring crowd."

An uninformed reader might suppose that this was written by a contemporary of Thackeray. In fact it is taken from Baedeker's *London* of 1902. Only fifty years after that date, the solitary rider in the Row, possibly a former sportsman enjoying a rare "afternoon off" from his office, manfully conceals his embarrassment at the laughter and contempt of onlookers almost as rare as he. The modern life of Hyde Park is to be seen, not in Rotten Row, but amid the mob orators of Marble Arch, and at the Lansbury Lido.

In Kensington Gardens we meet again with our familiar London feature: a royal park attached to a palace of the same name. The union of Kensington and Hyde Park was the work of Queen Caroline, the wife of George II, who was responsible, not only for the laying-out of most of the gardens, but also for the formation of the Serpentine. Indeed that energetic woman had plans for enclosing all the London parks and devoting them to exclusive Court use. (It should be noted that we are reaching the age of privacy.) When she asked Sir Robert Walpole how much this might cost, he replied, probably with truth, that it



*St. James's Park, looking East*

might cost her the throne, so she desisted. Kensington is usually associated with the girlhood and accession of Queen Victoria, but its great age was in the reign of George II, when that unpleasant and gifted little man, and his imperious and gifted wife, presided over the Court during a tremendous English period.

The palace itself, the work of Sir Christopher Wren and William Kent, is one of the most distinguished buildings in the possession of the Sovereign, surrounded by noble gardens in one of which Wren built a uniquely splendid orangery for Queen Anne. And yet Kensington, for all its glories, has had a surprisingly short history as a monarchical headquarters. The former house was bought by William III from Lord Nottingham, and used as the Sovereign's residence only till the accession of George III. Since then it has been inhabited by members and connections of the Royal family, but never by a King.

Kensington Gardens contain one of the great architectural curiosities of the world: the enormous Albert Memorial. When it was first built it was acclaimed as a masterpiece, and it remained very highly esteemed until about forty years ago. It was then universally execrated. Now the tide turns slowly in its favour. It may soon be acclaimed again, and in this it may be helped by many Londoners associating Kensington Gardens, and all that they contain, with the happiest of childhood memories. Above all others this is the children's park, probably because all children love to play at boats, and the famous Round Pond in front of the palace is large enough to make toy sailings hazardous, and yet not so large that miniature vessels are often lost with all hands, though this does sometimes happen amid terrible lamentations from the shore. However that may be, flocks of children playing round the pond form the distinctive population here. Not many other parks have any such special human type. Hyde Park has lost the fashionable crowds which, as we have seen, once made it so singular. The Green Park

harbours no distinctive type, though it has a special human feature in that procession of toilers in the offices of Mayfair who cross it every morning and evening going to and from Victoria Station. St. James's forms another rural pathway from that same station to the ministries of Whitehall. Around nine o'clock junior officials pass through it, discussing their homes and gardens together; and then, after a pause, come senior officials, their tongues tanging arguments of state. Prime Ministers sometimes take a walk here, for Downing Street is close. The most regular type, however, in all parks, is that of the elderly castaway sleeping on a bench.

Regent's Park and Primrose Hill were once part of the Royal Chase, and thus connected with Hyde Park and St. James's. The area remained wild until the Commonwealth, when it was cleared for pasture. Charles II replanted it, but after his death it was again neglected till the days of the Prince Regent after whom it is now named. He intended great things for this part of London, a vast royal residence to stand on Primrose Hill and to be connected with Westminster by a processional way. The palace of Primrose Hill was never built, but much remains of George IV's dream, especially in the numerous terraces built by Nash which surround the park to this day, and are to be preserved.

One long tradition of the parks is brought to its logical conclusion here, in the Zoological Society. Ever since the Middle Ages the Kings had kept rare beasts for the instruction and amusement of themselves and their people. These had been housed in the Tower, in St. James's Park, and in other places. In the early nineteenth century Sir Humphry Davy and Sir Stamford Raffles founded the present Society which before the war was only seriously rivalled by the Zoos of Berlin and Leipzig, and is now unquestionably the first in Europe. The Mappin Terraces (for the wild goats, Barbary sheep and bears), built in the early years of this century, have provided a model

for almost every zoo in the world, but perhaps the surest sign of excellence in the London Zoo is that it is one of the very few to have kept gorillas for any length of time. These appalling man-like beasts are not only very delicate in physical health, but are prone to melancholia, from the psychological disturbance of which they often die. They can only be harboured in captivity by people of the extremest technical skill. The Zoological gardens are at the Northern end of the park, and immediately beyond them rises Primrose Hill.

Of the palaces which we have so far considered, only the Tower, Westminster and Whitehall are, or were, town palaces in character. The rest were country seats, even until fairly recent times, and if it seems odd now to consider St. James's as a country seat, we should remember how drastically the town was divided from the country in the days of packed dwellings and foul drainage and also how impossible it would have been for the King to attend closely to his London affairs if he had lived much farther off, in those same days of slow transport and frequent highway robbery. Even so late as the mid-eighteenth century the King himself was once robbed in Kensington Gardens. St. James's, Kensington and Buckingham House were "rural-suburban" palaces in days when these were a necessity to the Sovereign. But within the limits of the vast sprawling Greater London of today there are two palaces which were country houses in the more modern sense of being distant places of retreat. One is Kew, the other is Hampton Court.

The town of Kew contains a whole collection of little houses for royalty, of which the most interesting is Kew Palace situated within the famous gardens. Perhaps all royalty has always had a cottagey side, a taste for what contrasts with its elaborate ritualistic duties. In the Kremlin the ancient apartments of the Tsar Boris Godounov are small by the standards of a pauper. Marie Antoinette's rooms in Versailles are minute, and she is famous, poor lady, for a hideous little farm. At Kew we find the

cottagey side of the Hanoverians and Victorians, so much so, indeed, that Queen Charlotte's rustic hovel at the western end bears a close resemblance to the *hameau* of Trianon. The present palace, which was more sensibly called "the Dutch House" when royalty lived there, was built in 1631 by a Dutch merchant, and after various adventures was leased by Frederick, Prince of Wales, in 1730, and then bought by his son George III as a nursery annexe to the now demolished Kew House. Till the time of Victoria it was inhabited by Kings and princes, packed together in the cottagey discomfort they enjoyed, and has been little changed since the seventeenth century. In one respect Kew Palace is quite unique, because it was built by the Dutch founder in his national style. The result is not beautiful, but significant. Dutch architecture is not exportable, and Kew speaks in an ancestral voice prophesying Pont Street and all that chaos of Dutch horror round Cadogan Square.

Hampton Court is one of the great buildings of Europe, though not formed of one design but by additions, from the days of Cardinal Wolsey the founder to those of Wren, who built the sublime farthestmost court for William III. Nowhere in England is the past so magically present as amid these walls, or in Bushy Park with its straight mile-long avenue of trees. Here is the greatest of the King's palaces, but unfortunately no King has lived at Hampton Court since George II. The reason is clear. Hampton lies in the direction of Windsor, so that if both these residences were maintained, the King would have the burden of two major establishments, but for a single purpose: whatever he might do from Hampton, he can do as conveniently from the old castle of Windsor. So, in the logic of things, Hampton Court has fallen into partial disuse.

Though it is much pity that the King does not live in his most beautiful house, it would be a yet greater pity if, even for the sake of Hampton Court, he were to abandon Windsor, the most historic of all English royal dwellings. It was founded by

*Crocuses in Hyde Park*





William the Conqueror, and begun in its present state by Edward III. It rises superbly on the Thames shore, dominating the little towns of Windsor and Eton, and visible at great distances, a supreme symbol of English strength and ceremony. The castle stands at the edge of the Home Park, which is nearly as ancient as its oldest stones, while from its southern walls stretches Windsor Great Park, a splendid expanse of grass and woodland covering close on two thousand acres. But Windsor is in Berkshire, and our business is in London. We must return downstream.

The biggest park of greater London is another royal one, Richmond, first enclosed by Charles I as a hunting-ground. It was originally part of a large forest and heathland which included Bushy, and it has less the character of a London park than of a welcome thrust into London of the countryside.

Between these royal parks and the public ones there is a rare species: the great private park. The most notable of these is Syon, near Kew, the seat of the Duke of Northumberland; the most famous, Holland Park and House in Kensington, the property of Lord Ilchester, now in a pitiful state of ruin after being struck by bombs. Many of the great public parks, and some of the royal ones, started as private properties of this kind. The transition is still going forward, an important example being Chiswick House, the suburban park and mansion of the Duke of Devonshire, which has been bought with public money and is now administered by the Middlesex County Council. It is a place of marvellous beauty.

The wholly public park, public in origin as well as use, and under the control of County Councils, is a development of the nineteenth century which has increased to great proportions as we may realise when we remember that, excluding the "Green Belt", at present in formation, the L.C.C. alone administers one hundred and five open spaces. Of these some thirty-five may be defined as "parks". Thanks to the

standards of taste and management set for many years in the royal parks, these have become the most pleasing addition to London in modern times, and a very considerable compensation for our many lost beauties.

The oldest, most popular, and largest of these places is Victoria Park, near the Mile End Road, which stands on ground bought and presented by the Queen in 1841. Others quickly followed in emulation. Finsbury Park, which is remarkably well designed at its northern end, is the delight of railway-lovers, for from here one may watch the great expresses picking up speed on outward journeys, or charging from distant counties towards King's Cross. Southwark has a park of rare beauty which is very little known to dwellers on the North Bank.

But the queen of all council parks is Battersea, the second oldest, lovely at every time of year, whether in a frosty season of skating, or on a mild spring day when such gentle grey light seems to steal over the trees by the water as we often see depicted by Corot of other places. For many, Battersea's high season is the summer, when at one end the lake is crowded with boaters, and the shore with children eating ices of many colours, while at the other end green fields are consecrated to the long dramas of cricket, sometimes played out under the eye of a frequent visitor, Mr. T. S. Eliot, who is an august amateur of the game.

Once a year Queen Mary inspects the Old English garden here. Unexpectedly enough, there are deer in this park, as in Richmond. It is beautifully sited. On one side is the great river, on another the Battersea Power Station, visible through the trees at a fitting distance, not dominating the park but providing a majestic view. In 1948 this enterprising Park was the scene of an outdoor exhibition of modern sculpture.

It has been sometimes complained that London has no amenity comparable to the Bois de Boulogne of Paris. The

charge is baseless if we remember the size and proximity of Richmond and Bushy Parks, though it remains true in the sense that a Londoner in London will never be able to find large woodlands within a few minutes' travelling, in the way a Parisian can in Paris. Even when the "Green Belt" is wholly complete this must remain true because of London's vast dimensions. So, in these circumstances, there has been evolved what is peculiar to our capital: tracts of rural parkland, set everywhere about London, in the very midst, so that a citizen is never far from those necessities of the soul: water, trees, grassland, and flowers.

## THE CITY OF LONDON

*Angus Maude*

It is possible that the City of London is no longer "the richest square mile in the world". Incendiary bombs and the economic aftermath of war have taken their toll of its buildings and its business. It is possible that it is no longer the most influential square mile in Britain, the centre of economic gravity having shifted westwards to Westminster and Whitehall. But it is certain that its influence is still considerable, and economic developments are as likely to increase as to diminish its present importance.

Certainly it is still a fascinating place to visit. Even the melancholy engendered by the destruction of so much beauty—in particular, of Guildhall, the Wren churches and the halls of the City Companies—is tempered by the discovery that much of the beauty that remains has actually been enhanced by the destruction of surrounding ugliness. The opening of wide vistas around St. Paul's, the opportunity of seeing from new angles Wren's surviving towers and spires, the appearance of gay little gardens where ten years ago were blocks of dingy offices—these are some compensation for what has been lost.

Most people know that the area of the City contains the origins of London itself. The Romans' walled town settled the boundaries of London for some centuries, and the direction of many surviving streets was originally determined by the line of the wall. This line proceeded from the Tower straight to Printing House Square, where in 1784 the first John Walter established *The Times* in the old King's Printing House; thence past the Old Bailey and round the G.P.O. to Aldersgate; eastwards from Cripplegate along London Wall to Bishopsgate; thence to Aldgate and back to the Tower. The area enclosed

by the wall was about 325 acres, or a little less than half the present area of the City. It is interesting that the important "Bank Crossing", to which sightseers now come to look at the Royal Exchange, the Mansion House and the Bank of England, stands precisely in the centre of the old Londinium, and still fulfils some of the functions of a Roman forum.

The present line of the City's boundaries would have struck Chaucer as perfectly familiar. Already, by the fourteenth century, the City had spread westwards from Ludgate to the Temple, and northwards to take in Smithfield and Moorgate. Growing richer and more powerful through the centuries, preserving a nice degree of independence from the rule of its royal neighbour in Westminster, the City kept itself to itself and steadfastly refused to extend its boundaries further. Despite its importance as a centre of commerce, it remained a populous residential area until the middle of the nineteenth century. But the resident population (once well over 200,000) fell steadily from 127,819 at the 1851 census to 10,999 at that of 1931. It is now about 6,000, a great many of whom are office caretakers.

The day (or working) population, however, grew steadily, reaching 436,721 by the 1921 census. It was probably about half a million in 1939, and the 1946 replanning proposals envisage working space in the future for about 470,000.

Yet the City has never been a centre of production, and today nothing of importance is produced within its boundaries except newspapers and books. And even the book trade, after the blitzing of the Paternoster Square area, is now moving westwards. But Production, which is all in all to the producer, is only a part of the economy of a country. It is one link of a chain whose other links are Commerce, Finance, Consumption and Administration: none of the five has much meaning without the others. Consumption is ubiquitous; Production is scattered throughout the country; Administration



*Guildhall in 1707*



*The Royal Exchange in 1754*



*Interior of the Bank of England, 1820*



*East Front of the Bank of England, 1828*

is centred on Whitehall; Commerce and Finance are centralised in the City.

Fleet Street, around which are congregated most of the great newspaper offices of London, was the historic highway between Westminster and the City, whose burgesses carefully barred the way against the King and his minions with a stout wooden bar placed across the street near the Temple. Today, when the King goes to give thanks at St. Paul's, he stops at Temple Bar to ask the Lord Mayor for permission to enter the City. The bar itself gave way to a graceful archway designed by Wren, but this proved too narrow for modern traffic and was removed in 1878 to Theobalds Park. Wren's gateway into Middle Temple Lane, however, survives: but the Luftwaffe—which could so easily have demolished the soulless Victorian Gothic hulk of Street's Law Courts across the way—preferred to batter the twelfth-century church of the Knights Templar and the Elizabethan Middle Temple Hall, one of the glories of London. Crown Office Row, where Charles Lamb lived, was totally destroyed.

But we may leave the lawyers and the journalists, who are in the City but not of it, and climb Ludgate Hill to where St. Paul's Cathedral (still London's tallest building) stands amid the ruin of what was once a district packed tight with the City's textile and clothing warehouses. The survival, with only trifling damage, of the vast fabric of Wren's cathedral was one of the miracles of the war. Old St. Paul's, its great Gothic predecessor, was destroyed in the fire of 1666; it had previously, during a storm in the reign of Elizabeth, lost a spire taller than that of Salisbury. But in other cities there remained noble examples of the perfection of English Gothic. To have lost the culminating masterpiece of the second great flowering of English architecture would have been a far worse disaster. Even the horror of the appalling junk-yard of debased monumental masonry which disfigures its interior



cannot mar the breathtaking grandeur of its design, nor wholly distract the eye from the continuous miracle of perfect proportion and ingenious construction.

In St. Paul's Churchyard, probably the village green of the earliest London, City workers still come to eat their sandwiches and throw the crumbs to the pigeons. Here a monument marks the site of the old Cross, where many a Dean—including the great John Donne—preached sonorous sermons to the citizens. From St. Paul's we may reach the Mansion House by way of Watling Street (the beginning of the Roman Road to St. Albans and thence to Chester), Bread Street (in which Milton was born) and the most famous thoroughfare of the City—Cheapside.

In the Mansion House lives the Lord Mayor, with his own prison beneath his dwelling, to show that he is Chief Magistrate of the City. Thence he sets forth on state occasions in a fabulous pumpkin coach, with purple-faced attendants decked out in wigs, gold lace and three-cornered hats. The Lord Mayor retains something of a feudal state, and while in the City takes precedence over even Princes of the Blood Royal. He is supported by two Sheriffs, and has something very like his own parliament; for the City of London, alone among British local authorities, has virtually a two-chamber government, with a Court of Aldermen and a Common Council. The Lord Mayor has his own Chamberlain, Marshal, Sword Bearer, and Common Cryer and Serjeant-at-Arms. The City has its own police force, with its own Commissioner.

The election of Sheriffs, and the selection of two Aldermen to be nominated for the position of Lord Mayor, is carried out by the Liverymen of the City Companies, who are also "Freemen" of the City. But the Freedom of the City, once obtainable only through apprenticeship and membership of a Guild, has since the middle of the last century been open to inhabitants and workers on payment of fees at Guildhall.

Standing before the Mansion House, you are in the centre of the financial sector of the City. On one side is the Royal Exchange, which has long historic associations, though the present building is Victorian—the third to occupy the site of the Exchange built by the great Sir Thomas Gresham (known to the economists as the proponent of “Gresham’s Law”) in the reign of Elizabeth. But the famous interior court, once divided into “Walks” peculiar to merchants and brokers in different commodities, no longer echoes with the noise of commerce. Lloyd’s—the last institution within its walls which even resembled a market—moved to its own new building in Leadenhall Street in 1928.

On an island site opposite the Mansion House stands the Bank of England, its impressive bulk compounded of two strata—the low, heavy, windowless, classical pastiche of the Regency architect Soane, and the yellowish lump superimposed on it by Sir Herbert Baker in the 1930’s. The interior is no less oppressive, relieved only by the pink tail-coats and scarlet waistcoats of the messengers. To visit one of the directors is to make a ceremonial progress down seemingly endless corridors, your card being passed like a relay baton from hand to hand at intervals of about a quarter of a mile, until finally the door of the holy of holies is reverently tapped.

The early history of the Bank was considerably more exciting than its present respectability suggests. Founded in 1694 to finance the wars of William III, it was the creation of the Scottish adventurer William Paterson, architect of the ill-fated Darien expedition which ruined half Scotland. From 1708 to 1826 it possessed a monopoly of joint-stock banking in England, and persisted for many years after that in regarding the increasingly powerful joint-stock banks as rather unsavoury competitors. Before giving up all but a fraction of its commercial banking business, it survived crisis after crisis. Perhaps the most amusing episode in its history was the run on the

Bank following the initial successes of the Young Pretender in 1745: taken completely by surprise, the Bank gained time by the brilliant expedient of paying off the notes presented to it in sixpences—and taking as long about it as possible.

During the nineteenth century cut-throat hostilities were still common among financiers, and the Bank was often violently attacked. Not long before their spectacular failure in 1866, the Quaker firm of Overend, Gurney & Co. made a determined attempt to break the Bank, by building up a large credit balance and suddenly demanding £3,000,000 in cash. But “the dog it was that died”; the firm’s failure disclosed liabilities of £10,000,000, and its affairs took twenty-five years to clear up. Finance today—at least since 1931—is less exciting.

The business of the Bank of England now falls into two separate spheres. It is the country’s note-issuing authority, managing a paper currency of £1,300 million. On each of its notes the Chief Cashier, signing on behalf of the “Governor and Compania”, lightheartedly promises “to pay the Bearer on Demand the sum of One Pound” (or Ten Shillings), apparently oblivious of the fact that convertibility into gold was suspended some years ago and that his resources in gold amount to 0.02 per cent of his outstanding notes. Nearly all the banking business of the “Old Lady of Threadneedle Street” now consists of looking after the Government’s loose cash and that of the other banks. All the joint-stock banks keep a proportion of their assets on deposit at the Bank of England.

The vast head offices of the “Big Five”—Barclays and Lloyds, the Midland, the Westminster and the National Provincial—are all within a few hundred yards of the “Old Lady”: but there is nothing architecturally striking about these huge temples of finance, nor is there anything more exciting going on inside than the operation of a superlatively efficient routine.

The history of British commercial joint-stock banking really begins with the provision of finance for the expanding trade of the Industrial Revolution, followed by continuous concentration and amalgamations of the banks themselves. Until an Act of 1833 threw the field open, joint-stock branch-banking (which, on a nation-wide scale, is a purely British pursuit) had been held at bay by the opposition of the private banks—successors to the old goldsmith bankers—and of the Bank of England, of whose “caprices, insults and vexatious impertinences” the newcomers were still complaining in 1837. But the financial demands of industry were too great to be met by private bankers; despite a stubborn rearguard action, they were gradually ousted from the scene, until now only Hoare’s retains its independence. But what a history this bank has! Established some time before 1673 as “Richard Hoare, Goldsmith and Banker”, it is still managed by nine members of the same family, all bearing the name of Hoare.

Of the “Big Five”, only the Westminster originated in the City of London, whence it started to expand outwards only in this century. Unlike the others, Barclays started life as a private partnership, being owned by three Quaker families, and its origins go back at least as far as 1699. At the time of its incorporation in 1896, it was sonorously styled Barclay, Bevan, Tritton, Ransome, Bouverie & Co.

As yet unmoved and unaffected by the nationalisation of the Bank of England, the joint-stock banks administer a banking system renowned (and unrivalled) throughout the world for soundness and efficiency. The fact that their direct advances to customers are always in the form of short-term loans has enabled them to survive slumps and crises intact—if not always popular with their borrowers. Another tradition which has contributed to their soundness is that of putting the interests of their depositors before those of their share-

holders, and thus avoiding the quest for speculative profits which has ruined many a bank in Europe and America.

No impressive concrete palaces mark the sites where the merchant bankers do their business. There is a certain aloofness even about New Court, off St. Swithin's Lane, although it is here that the Rothschild millions have fructified and gone forth on their travels about the world. The merchant banks proper (there are some firms which are almost wholly merchanting concerns, doing very little banking business) are often known as "acceptance houses", from their practice of "accepting" bills of exchange. This service consists of verifying the financial soundness of a debtor on whom a bill has been drawn and endorsing the bill with the acceptance house's own name and guarantee, thus enabling the creditor to "discount" the bill, which is to sell it before maturity for ready cash. Business of this sort was much larger and more profitable when there was a huge volume of unrestricted international trade, with London as its financial centre. Nowadays the merchant banks are turning more and more to the finance of British industry.

Hollywood saw in the Rise of the House of Rothschild the highlight of the romantic history of merchant banking. It was in 1797 that Nathan Rothschild arrived in England. After a profitable period of trafficking in Manchester cotton goods, the firm established itself in the City and began to concentrate upon finance to the exclusion of commerce. The finance of the Peninsular War, the advance information of the result of the Battle of Waterloo, the purchase for Disraeli's government of £4,000,000 worth of Suez Canal shares in 1875—all these are fairly well-known landmarks in the firm's progress. By 1904 it was reputed to have been concerned in arranging £1,300 million of loans.

The firm of Baring Brothers began in the City as a merchanting concern in 1763, founded by three sons of an Exeter wool

merchant who immigrated from Bremen in 1717; most notable of the three was Sir Francis Baring, who became a chairman of the East India Company, M.P. and baronet. In its early days the firm was allied financially with the Hopes of Amsterdam and matrimonially with the Bingham of Philadelphia. Among its earlier coups was the issue of a loan to the new French government to enable France to recover from the Waterloo campaign. Barings also financed Russia after the Crimean War, Canada during its railway boom, and Argentina just before the revolution of 1890. This last episode produced a sensational crisis. Barings were caught in a completely illiquid condition with liabilities of £30½ million. They were helped along until their assets could be realised, and the firm reconstructed as a public joint-stock company, by the first manifestation of that remarkable solidarity in adversity which has now become a tradition of the City.

This tradition has arisen to some extent in the process of "institutionalising" the City—a process which has been going on for some time and is now virtually completed. Individuals find it difficult, with taxation at present-day levels, to amass enough capital to operate on a large scale. Even old-established partnerships are faced with the difficult problem of replacing the private capital which death duties are continually removing from the business. It is this intermittent drain on capital which so often forces the surviving partners to restrict or cease business, or else to reconstruct the undertaking as a public joint-stock company. This has been happening since the war among the discount brokers of Lombard Street and Cornhill.

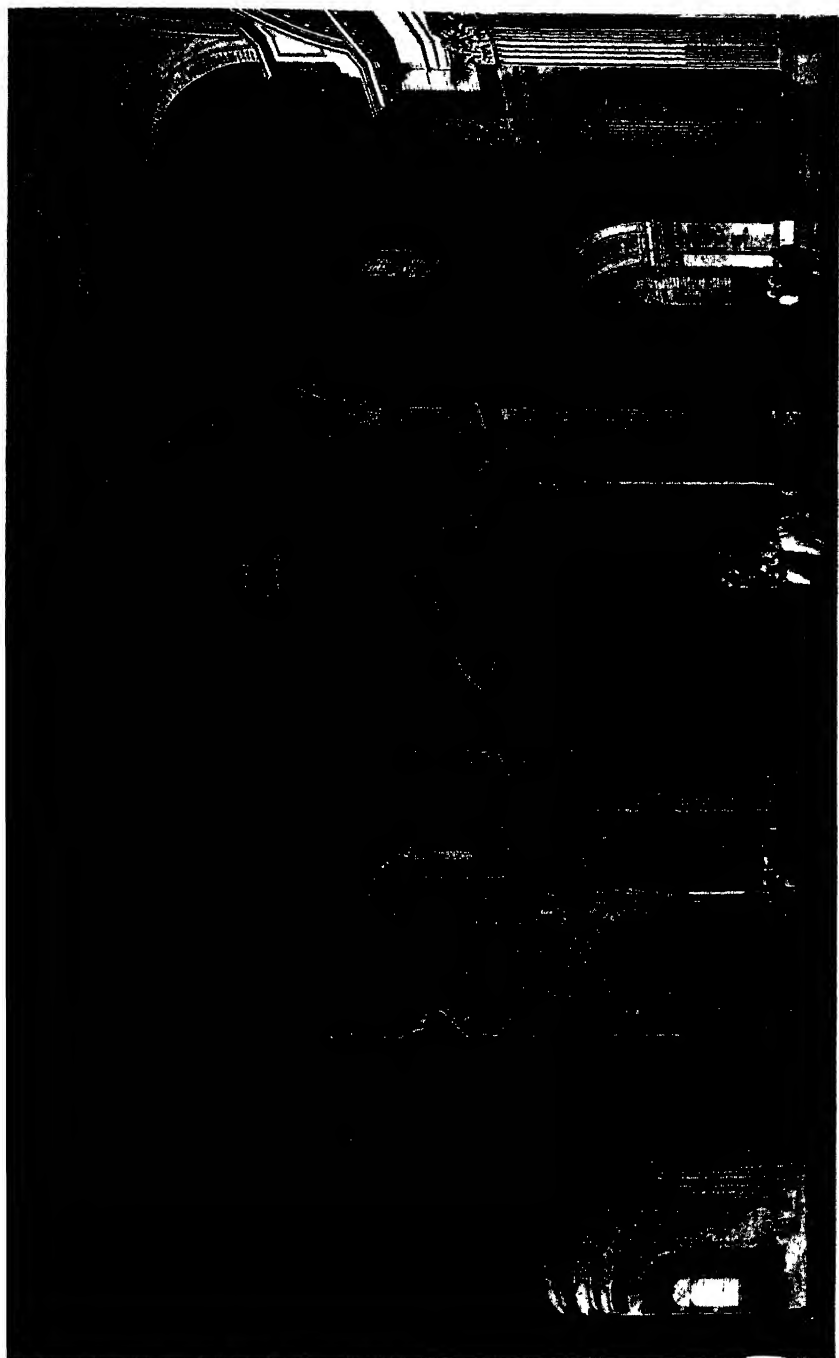
The new conditions ruling in the City are nowhere more apparent than in Throgmorton Street, the home of the stock-broking fraternity. And the change in the status of stock-brokers is primarily due to a change in the status of their clients. The easy-going, if fiercely competitive, *laissez-faire* of the old days in the City is dead, and individualism is dying. The

day of the financial buccaneer seems to be past, and it is fairly certain that we shall never again look on the like of the Railway King, George Hudson, or of the South African "Randlords". The company promoter and the big market operator have given way to the finance house—the individual to the joint-stock company.

The spectacular amassing of vast fortunes is now incredibly difficult. Whereas the stockbroker's principal clients used to be a few big operators who used him simply as an agent, he now acts as guide, philosopher and friend to a host of small investors each with only a few hundreds or thousands of pounds at their disposal. This has tended to raise his professional status, and has also provided a powerful inducement to the Stock Exchange to devise shark-proof safeguards for the investing public. In this the elected Council of the "House" (the Stock Exchange operates under no charter, but is actually a joint-stock company, the shares of which are held by its members) has triumphantly succeeded. It has evolved a constitution which gives the public a quite remarkable degree of protection against exploitation by broker, jobber, or company promoter, and it has voluntarily restricted speculation to within very reasonable limits.

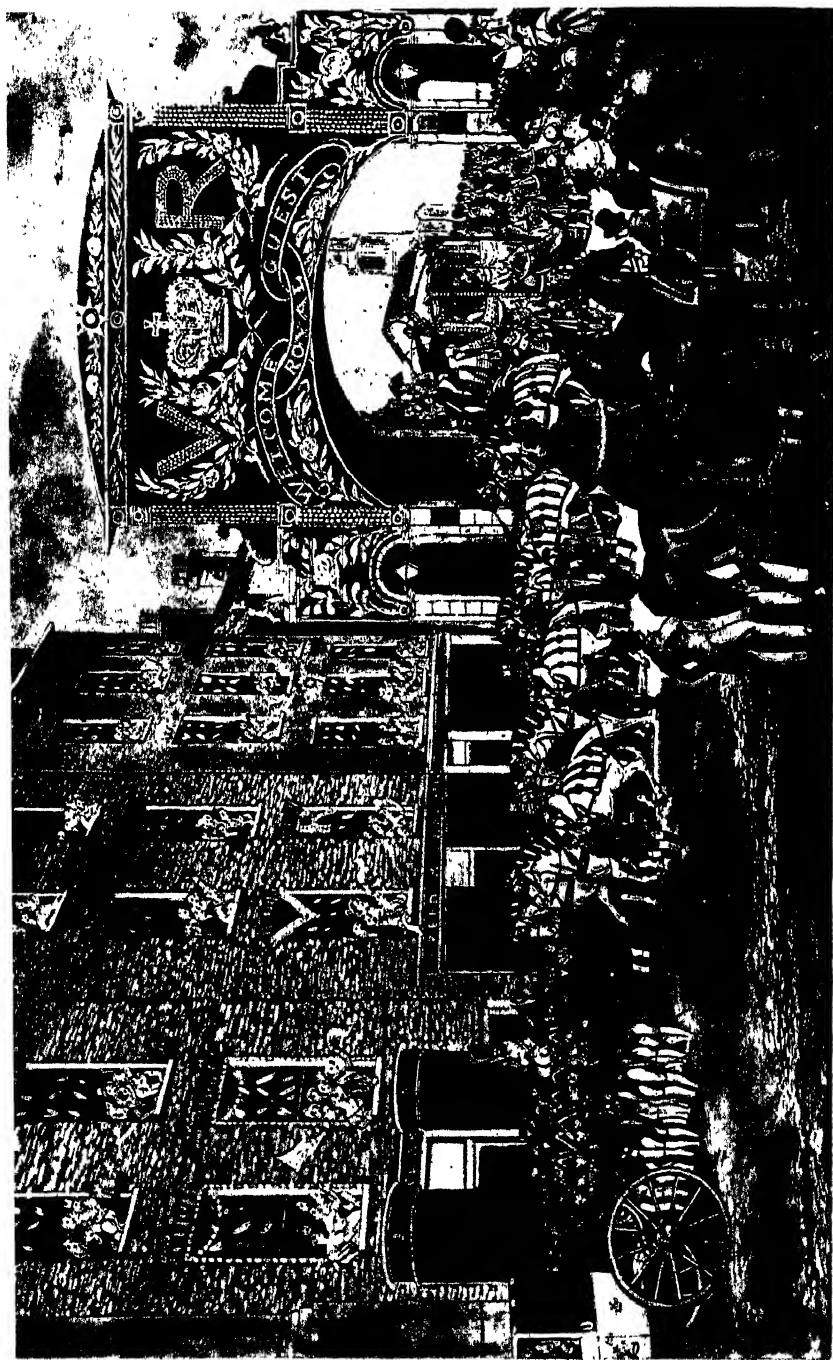
Anyone who has met a stockbroker (and who has not?) may rest assured that that is exactly what stockbrokers are really like. This may be said with confidence, despite the heterogeneous nature of the tribe. Certain characteristics common to nearly all its members can be distilled from the widely varying natures of the individuals: these include a marked gusto in anecdote, a tendency to be wrong about higher economics, an unchanging gloom about the prospects of their own profession, and a slightly naïve outlook on aspects of life unconnected with stocks, shares, beer or racehorses.

You may see them in Throgmorton Street, popping in and out of the gloomy, shapeless hulk of the Stock Exchange.



*Interior of St. Paul's Cathedral, c. 1790*





*Queen Victoria at Temple Bar on her way to Guildhall, November 9th, 1837*

But you cannot get into the "House" itself, even to visit one of them. The entrances, marked "Subscribers only admitted", are guarded by alert custodians in gold-braided top-hats, whom the members quaintly style "waiters". This title is derived from the days when there was no Stock Exchange building, and brokers and jobbers met to do business in City coffee houses such as Jonathan's and Garroway's, being attended by the waiters of those pleasant eighteenth-century institutions. The coffee houses themselves are today no more than memorial plaques on the walls of Change Alley, off Cornhill; but "New Jonathan's", in its heyday, actually called itself The Stock Exchange (the name being "wrote over the door", we are told) and charged sixpence for admission. Incidentally, the visitor should not be misled by the plaque let into the front of the Mansion House, which proclaims that "Adjoining this spot stood the Stocks market, 1282-1737", for the market on this site dealt only in farm produce.

The City still contains four great markets in which physical stocks of foodstuffs are handled. The fish markets at Billingsgate, below London Bridge and almost on the site of the port of Roman Londinium, are getting too big for the space available, and may well be moved if there is ever a major replanning operation in the City, although fish has been sold at Billingsgate for well over a thousand years. But the great meat market is secure at Smithfield—the old Smooth Field, on which were held medieval tourneys and later the famous Bartholomew Fair. And poultry will no doubt continue to be sold in Leadenhall Street, as will vegetables at Spitalfields.

But these markets, like the newspapers of Fleet Street and the diamond merchants of Hatton Garden, are in the City but not of it. The real commercial markets of the City, which made it the commercial centre of the world, dealt in commodities which were scarcely seen on the spot. It is true that a great deal of wool might be seen at the western end

of the City, and large quantities of furs in the south. But in the commercial quarter at the eastern end, the commodities dealt in were so closely standardised that they could be bought and sold while still at sea or in a distant warehouse or granary; all that was needed in Mincing Lane or St. Mary Axe was the inspection of a few samples. Immense quantities of grains, metals, tea, rubber, cocoa, spices and other commodities were dealt in every year before the war—the cargoes being sometimes sold to foreign buyers while still at sea, with the result that they were never landed in Britain at all. But the commissions on the deals, in sorely-needed foreign currencies, came to Britain. Very few such commissions reach us now, for world shortages have given an extended lease of life to the war-time practice of Government bulk buying, and most of the City's old markets are still closed.

Some of the commercial area has been laid waste by bombs. But the shipping offices are still busy in Fenchurch Street and Leadenhall Street, ranged about the great building of Lloyd's. You can insure against practically anything (except death) at Lloyd's; but it is known to fame as the world's centre of shipping insurance and intelligence. Marine insurance has a long history, for the preamble to an Act of Parliament in Queen Elizabeth's reign described how "it cometh to pass that upon the loss or perishing of any ship there followeth not the undoing of any man, but the loss lighteth rather easily upon many than heavy upon few". The institution of Lloyd's has its origin in the late seventeenth century, in a group of merchants and shipping men who met at Lloyd's Coffee House in Tower Street. Edward Lloyd himself was a great man, who of his own initiative made his house the centre of the shipping intelligence of the world; he personally started publication in 1696 of the news sheet which was the predecessor of *Lloyd's List*. Out of the clientele of the coffee house grew a club of underwriters who formed the nucleus

of the institution of Lloyd's. In the underwriters' "Room" today, their "boxes" are still modelled on the seats of the old coffee house, and shipping casualties are still entered in the Lost Book with a quill pen. And when a vessel which is thought to be lost turns up safely in port, the announcement is prefaced by the sounding of the famous Lutine Bell, salvaged from the wreck of the *Lutine*, which foundered in 1799.

Such is the power of tradition in the City, even the war-shattered City of today. If only the tradition of the coffee houses had survived! Even before the war the tradition of good eating was almost dead. Eating in the City is generally a dismal business, for the places in which it is tolerable to eat are far too crowded for comfort. There are few clubs, very few survivors of the noble type of eighteenth-century chop-house which patrons of the old "George and Vulture" deeply revere; Big Business must either travel westward to Simpsons or the Savoy, or else enter the gloomy portals of a railway hotel. One of the few remaining links with the past is Birch's, and even this was ousted from Cornhill by Lloyds Bank in 1927, after an unbroken existence there since 1690; however, it found a new home in Angel Court, behind a replica of the charming old shop-front which it presented to the Victoria & Albert Museum.

Presumably the demand has failed. Everyone is in too much of a hurry for civilised social eating. Why, when their mechanical aids ought to be doing so much of their work for them? Perhaps because they no longer *live* in the City, but waste hours of the day in coming up from the outer suburbs. Whatever the reason, the chop-house has given way to the quick-lunch counter, the coffee house to that dismal time-saver the Office Teapot.

Whether the unhealthy working conditions in most old City offices will give way to a modicum of light and fresh air depends largely on the future of the City of London Plan. Whether

the Government of the country and the City Fathers will bring the Plan safely to execution, or whether it will be eaten away by short-sighted expediency, remains to be seen. The forebears of these City Fathers allowed little of Wren's glorious plan to materialise after the Great Fire, and there is very much more of the City standing now than there was in 1666.

It is, alas, true that much that was beautiful has gone. Most of the splendid halls of the Livery Companies have gone the way of Guildhall, now only a shell. Many of the loveliest churches are in ruins. Others, however, were less seriously damaged, and a considerable number of the famous Wren towers and steeples still stands. Some of the ruins will be swept away. Some of the fallen churches will be rebuilt, while others—whose walls and towers survive—will be preserved as they are, in memory of the agony and futility of war. Before the Fire of 1666, there were 107 parish churches in the City. Before the fire of December 29, 1940, there were 47. How many there will be in 1960 we cannot tell.

But the visitor should not leave the City without seeking out a monument which has survived fire and war, which has welcomed citizen and passer-by for nearly 800 years. On the edge of Smithfield is the church of St. Bartholomew-the-Great, which embodies the choir, crossing and Lady Chapel of the Priory Church founded in 1123 by Henry I's Chancellor Rahere. Its solid Norman pillars are the product of an age which did not bother about planning, but built simply to the glory of God—and built to last. It may be that we can do it again, but within the framework of a plan as noble as that of Wren. Yet where is the Wren? Is there an architect today whose tomb will bear the proud epitaph, *Si monumentum requiris, circumspice?*



*Jenifer Wayne*

## THE LAW IN LONDON

*Drawings by David Knight*

If, when you are in the Strand, you happen to see a man in black and white striped trousers and a black coat, carrying something that looks like a purple laundry bag, you may be sure he is a barrister on his way to the Courts. The purple bag contains his wig and gown. You watch him as he walks past the policeman in the arched entrance of all that pseudo-Gothic stonework—the Law Courts. As he disappears you speculate as to his business there: perhaps he is going to break a marriage, to dispute a will, to save a bankrupt his money or a murderer his life. It might be any of these things—for behind that façade lie the Court of Probate, Divorce, and Admiralty (an apparently odd mixture more colloquially known as “Wills, Wives and Wrecks”), the Bankruptcy Court, the Court of Chancery, the Court of Criminal Appeal, and the

King's Bench Division. All these are included in the general title "Supreme Court of Judicature", or, to be more informal, the Royal Courts of Justice.

Impressive phrases: it is curious to think that only a fraction of Britain's litigation now happens here. It was Henry II who started to decentralise the administration of the law: before his time it was all done in the King's Court at Westminster. Now there are, in the London area alone, sixty-seven Magistrates' Courts, fifteen County Courts, two Courts of Quarter Sessions, one Court of Assize, seven Juvenile Courts, a number of Coroners' Courts, and several "Courts of Arbitration" which are in more or less permanent session and deal with commercial disputes that the parties do not want to take to the ordinary Courts.

But to go back to the Law Courts proper. You can walk in and ask to hear a case there if you wish, but you are unlikely to strike anything very dramatic. The Divorce Court, for example, is a cut-and-dried affair; the evidence, served up with all the calm efficiency of established routine, seems remote from the feelings that must have created it. Every afternoon there is one corridor full of barristers' clerks, swarming with the busy indifference of flies around the notice-boards when the lists of next day's cases are pinned up.

The Judge in the Bankruptcy Court sits listening day after day to almost incredible tales of financial folly.

"Just a minute," he will interrupt occasionally, "you say your books show a deficit of £379 for the first quarter of this year?"

"Yes."

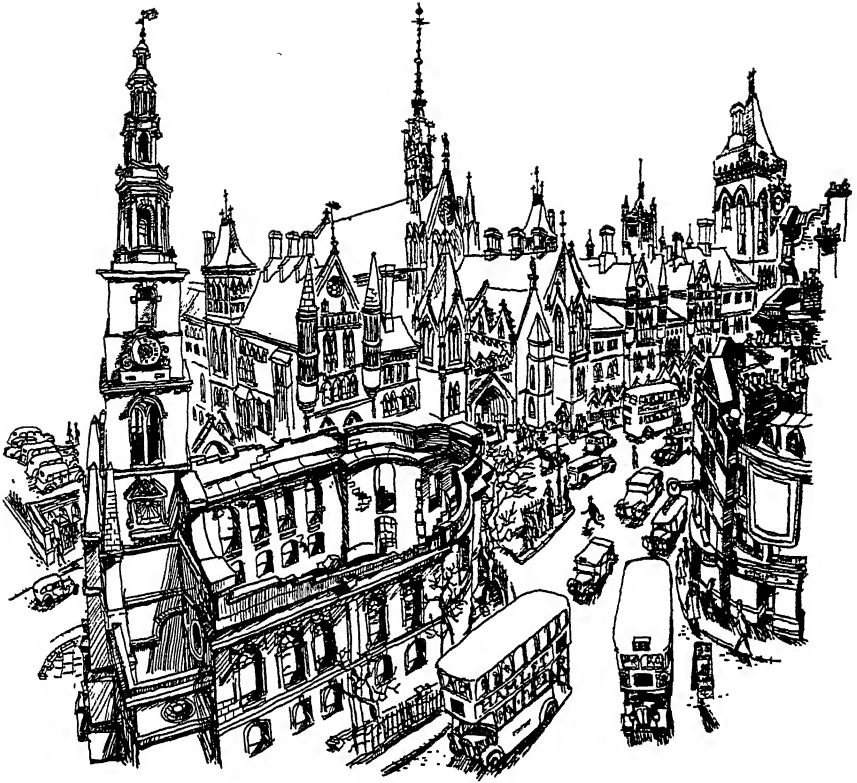
"But a few minutes ago you said that during this month you had spent £450 on a fur coat for your wife."

"Yes, that's right."

"And another £393 on refurnishing your sales room?"

"That's it."

## THE LAW IN LONDON



“Very well. Go on.” The Judge sighs and sits back, and the man continues to protest that it is not his fault that he cannot pay his debts.

After a morning in the Bankruptcy Court your head swims with figures. On the whole, bankruptcy procedure is a drab, undramatic business: you find yourself hankering after livelier matter. You will be less likely to find it at the Law Courts than anywhere else. By the time a case has reached the Court of Criminal Appeal, for example, it will have attained a high degree of technicality, and all you would hear would be



counsel reading very long speeches and the Judge giving the Court's decision probably at even greater length. You would not even see the appellant himself: he sits behind a red curtain.

If there ever is such a thing as a "scene" in the Law Courts, it can be dealt with by a specially appointed officer. Not a policeman—the police never go into the Law Courts except as witnesses—but that unique and long-established official, the tipstaff. "The police have no jurisdiction inside this building", he will tell you proudly. But he is not in sole charge—the Law Courts have their own uniformed staff, called custodians. They wear blue uniforms with silver facings and peaked pillbox caps.

It is the tipstaff's duty to arrest and convey to prison people committed by the Court: he takes them in a taxi to Brixton or Holloway Gaol. And if anyone misbehaves during a hearing, it is the tipstaff who is sent for to remove the offending person. He may have to walk a considerable way to do this: there are several miles of corridor in the Law Courts.

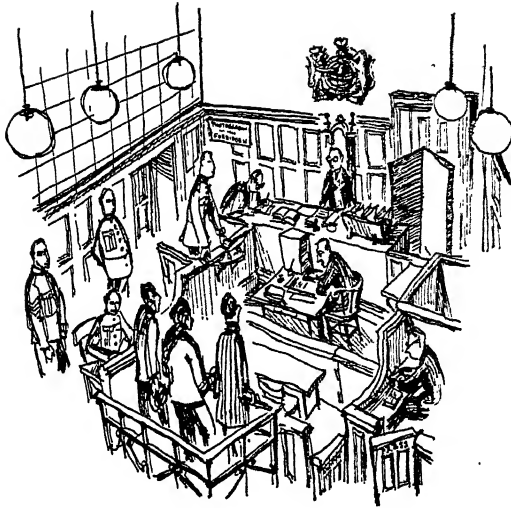
There is only one tipstaff in the whole of Britain, and here, in the Law Courts, is his office. But he is rarely to be found in it—and he has a deputy to take charge while he is away, as he often is, fetching defaulters from other parts of the country.

If the Law Courts seem more dramatic in appearance than in action, the Magistrates' Courts show an opposite tendency.

They were known, until recently, as Police Courts, but the name was changed in order to avoid any idea that they were actually run by the police.

They are comfortless places. You probably go in by way of a swing door, and find yourself in a dark, square hall with benches round the walls. A few people sit here, alone and palely staring. Perhaps in one corner a group of them murmur in apathetic undertones. Various doors are marked with inscriptions in capital letters; black on dreary brown. At the end of a short corridor there is one marked GAOLER; another

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says MATRON; another FEMALE WITNESSES' ROOM. Round the square hall a few notices inform you that "Photographing in Court is strictly forbidden", and "Smoking and spitting prohibited". And there, opposite you, is a small closed door labelled COURT.

You can walk in and sit at the back to listen. The panelled walls are quite impressive after the drab entrance-hall, but they seem to have a deadening effect on the human voice. The Magistrate sits at a table on a raised dais; his Clerk has another table immediately beneath him, on ground-level. The men in the side benches nearest to the Magistrate are probably solicitors. No one wears a wig or gown. At one side, near the back of the Court, helmetless policemen sit in a row waiting to give evidence. Other policemen pad silently in and out and around the Court all day long, on various errands—fetching witnesses, escorting prisoners, bringing forms to be signed by the Clerk or the Magistrate.

If you arrive at ten o'clock in the morning, you are pretty certain to see the conviction of a succession of drunks and

prostitutes. These are always dealt with first, as their cases take so little time.

"George Jenkins!" calls the gaoler.

A man shuffles up into the dock, wan after a night in the cells.

"George Jenkins," the Clerk announces, "you are charged with being drunk and incapable last night in Pinchbeck Row. Guilty or not guilty?"

"Well—guilty, I suppose."

The Clerk turns to a policeman, who goes into the witness-box.

"Where did you find him, Constable?"

"Lying on the footway by the corner of Stopford Street, Sir."

"Ten shillings," says the Magistrate.

"Thank you, sir."

"Harold Brocket!" the gaoler calls, and another man spends a similar two minutes in the dock.

"Twenty shillings."

"Time to pay, Sir?"

The Magistrate looks up, rather wearily.

"Very well, you can have seven days. But we're tired of seeing you here, you know. Don't let it happen again."

And so it goes on.

But there is great variety in the Magistrate's Court. You may hear, on the same day, some motoring offences, a barrow-boy charged with obstructing the highway, a larceny, a man accused of "receiving", and the opening of a murder case. There is no limit to the *criminal* offences that can come before the Magistrates. Not that they are all disposed of here—in many cases there can only be a preliminary hearing in this Court. For example, bigamy, burglary, forgery over £20, arson, rape, perjury and a number of others *must* go before a Judge and jury. And with a few exceptions, any charge that exposes a defendant to the risk of imprisonment for more than

three months gives him the right to be tried by a Judge and jury if he wishes. He must be told of this, quite clearly, before his case is begun. Sometimes it takes several repetitions to bring the point home to him.

"Do you understand?" says the Clerk to an anxious little man who stands peering over a wooden rail at the back of the Court. (He has been brought here on a summons, not by arrest, so he does not have to go into the dock. This rule leads to some anomalies: a man would have to stand up in the dock for stealing a banana, but a summons for some gigantic fraud would leave him on ground-level with the rest of us.)

The Clerk is still painstakingly repeating the information that the little man can be tried by a Judge and jury or here, in this Court. The accused begins to fidget desperately, when suddenly light dawns.

"This Court," he mutters.

"Very well." And the case proceeds.

The charge is one of selling horsemeat at more than the controlled price. After a Ministry of Food inspector has given evidence, the accused, who is not represented, is asked if he wants to put any questions to this witness.

"Yes." He shuffles from one foot to the other. "Didn't you see me serve a whole queue of people with meat?"

"Yes, I did."

"Well then: you could have said who you were in the first place, couldn't you? I mean to say, it was just a trap, wasn't it?"

"One question at a time," says the Clerk mildly.

"Well, what I want to ask him is, what about the price we have to pay for horsemeat wholesale? By the time you've had your expense, fetching it from the market and that, you wouldn't be getting any profit at all, unless——"

"Just a minute: you are supposed to be asking the witness *questions*, you know. You'll have an opportunity of making a statement later if you want to."

But the distinction between a question and a statement is too subtle for this defendant. After repeated attempts to justify himself, he is quietly but firmly stopped, and the witness steps down. It might seem that such rules are hard on the uninitiated, but in practice they are not unkindly enforced. If, through a defendant's stumbling clutter of words, a real question is dimly discernible, the Clerk will often extract it in order to help him out. Every defendant is at liberty to make as full a statement as he likes after the other evidence has been heard. He can do this in the witness-box or not, as he chooses. If he goes into the box, he may be cross-examined on anything he says; if he does not, no questions will be asked, but his statement is regarded as having less weight than if he were on oath.

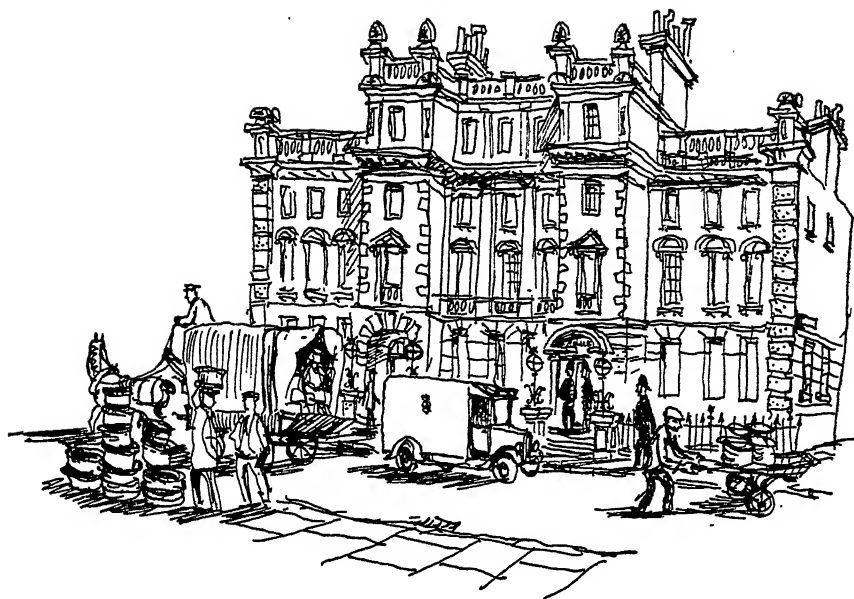
The little horsemeat man decides to go into the box. A policeman motions him towards it, and he reads the oath, which is printed on a card fastened to the ledge along the front of the witness-box.

After he has ambled through his story, he stands waiting while the Magistrate has a word in undertones with the Clerk. Then follows the Magistrate's brief comment on the case—and the sentence.

"Fifty pounds or fourteen days."

The policeman directs the defendant, in undertones, to the cashier's office to pay his fine. And the next case is called.

A Magistrate cannot give a sentence of more than six months, except in certain cases: for smuggling, for example, he can give as much as two years, though that is quite exceptional. It is to a Court of this kind, however, that *all* criminal cases must come for their first hearing. So the Magistrate sees a considerable slice of life. Most of the Magistrates you will see on the Benches in Central London Courts are "stipendiaries"—that is, they are paid. Theirs is a full-time job, and they are always experienced barristers. There are only eighteen stipendiaries in the whole of the rest of the country: most provincial Magis-



trates' Courts, and those in the outer districts of London, are run by laymen.

At about one o'clock the Magistrate decides that it is time for lunch, and everyone stands while he goes out. When you ask the policeman at the door what time the Court starts again, you may quite possibly be told: "Closed for matrimonial cases this afternoon." So you must find your entertainment elsewhere. The Magistrates' Courts deal with a great number of matrimonial cases—separation, wife-maintenance, illegitimacy, for example, though they cannot grant divorces. But these matrimonial affairs are now heard with a certain degree of sympathetic privacy: before this was the custom some people were denied justice because they shrank from the publicity of the open Court.

Because he sits every day of the week and holds his Court alone, a London Stipendiary Magistrate becomes an important

figure in the lives of the local people: and when he is a man of outstanding personality, sharpness, wisdom, or witticism his Court soon becomes, through the Press, a source of interest to a much wider public—men like Mr. Frederick Mead, who sat at Marylebone Court until he was well over eighty and never failed to provide shots of forensic or worldly wisdom for the delight of the evening papers; or Sir Chartres Biron, the Chief Magistrate, who sat for so many years at Bow Street and tried some of the most famous cases of this century; or Mr. Claud Mullins, whose administration at the South-western Court in Battersea until his recent retirement was marked by so bold and progressive a use of psychiatry in criminal cases and conciliation in matrimonial disputes. The London Stipendiary Magistrates are probably more closely in touch with the lives of the people than any other official, lay or legal, in the whole hierarchy of social service, and their Courts are a perfect mirror of many aspects of metropolitan life.

Another institution similarly identified with the legal difficulties of the people is that of the "Poor Man's Lawyer". Every district has its Citizens' Advice Bureau, founded by the National Council of Social Service, sponsored by the Law Society (the solicitors' "trade union") and the Home Office. Each has a Poor Man's Lawyer Centre to which the poor can take their troubles when they find themselves caught up in the toils of the law; they get free legal advice from a solicitor who is giving his services, including sometimes the writing of legal letters, the negotiation of settlements in cases that can be "settled out of court", and the provision of a solicitor to present or defend a case in any Court, civil or criminal. This service is shortly to be revised and extended, under a new Act of Parliament bringing free legal aid to people with incomes of less than £420 a year.

The Juvenile Courts have been closed to the public for many years. They are held in different buildings, or, failing that, in

different rooms from the Magistrates' Courts, or on different days. The purpose of this is to dissociate them as far as possible from the atmosphere of the adult Courts. They have acquired their own atmosphere; and generally there is a friendly informality which encourages both children and parents to talk freely. Of course, they do not always respond. In some of the London Juvenile Courts it is not uncommon to see a fourteen- or fifteen-year-old girl stand sullenly before the Magistrates, dumb with defiance or misery. These young street-corner-girls ("prostitute" seems too damning a word for them) are one of the problems of the Juvenile Courts in any big city. Very often they are found to be "in need of care and protection", and are sent to a remand home while a place is found for them at one of the "approved schools"—which, it is hoped, they will come to prefer to the lights of Leicester Square or Tottenham Court Road.

Pressmen are admitted to the Juvenile Courts, but their papers must not, unless a Court has for some reason expressly allowed it, publish the name, address or school of any child. Apart from the Press, you would see very few people in these Courts; there is always a probation officer, and generally three Magistrates, one of whom must be a woman. A child is never referred to as "the defendant" or "the prisoner"—and indeed these Courts are by no means only for juvenile delinquents. There are a great number of "care and protection" cases where the child involved has done nothing wrong but is found to have an unsuitable home, or to be neglected or ill-treated by the parents. So the court is the child's protector as well as his judge.

And so, in a way, the County Courts are the protectors of the people. For here you can come to claim redress for any civil wrong: to settle a debt, to get an injunction for the abatement of a private nuisance (a public nuisance is a criminal affair and must be tried in a criminal Court), to decide a dispute between landlord and tenant—and hundreds of other "civil" matters.



The Judge in a County Court sits alone without a jury, and he wears a wig and a navy blue robe with a violet sash. Solicitors, as well as barristers, can plead in these Courts, and they too wear gowns, here, but no wigs.

The County Courts can settle claims for damages up to £200, or larger claims sent back there to them from the High Court. But the smaller cases are as varied as you could wish: people come here seeking justice for all manner of wrongs, from dog-bites to defaulting debtors. You can go in and listen at any time: the fifteen County Courts in London sit at least once a month, except in September, when they take a holiday.

A Court which never has time for a holiday at all is the Quarter Sessions for the County of London. This is at the London Sessions House in Newington Causeway. It is not, as its name implies, intended to sit more than four times a year: in fact they are so busy at this particular Court that they sit twice a month, and the sessions often overlap.

But the Court with all the morbid glamour, the Court the sightseers make for, the Court that commands the biggest headlines of all, is of course the Old Bailey. "Up the steps", as it is called by the criminal classes.

This is the Court of Assize for most of the Home Counties and for offences on the "high seas", and it occasionally takes cases from outside the Home Counties when local prejudice might make it difficult to impanel, locally, an impartial jury. The only working difference between the Old Bailey and the provincial Assize Courts is that it has no jurisdiction in divorce or other civil matters.

Unless you have a special reason for admission at the front entrance, you will have to walk round the side of the building to Newgate Street and join a queue there for the public gallery. When a notorious case is on, this queue begins to form in the small hours of the morning—and only the first fifty or so people will be admitted. But if you are a law student, a friend or



relative of the prisoner, a juror or a witness or a foreign visitor, you walk up the few steps to the swing-doors of the main entrance and state your case to the police constable on duty. Then you go into the dim marbled entrance hall, and on up the wide stone stairway that leads to the Courts. Barristers pass you with wigs and billowing gowns. In the broad flagged area from which the courts open, there are long seats occupied by an odd assortment of people; some looking bored, some anxious, some idly curious. These are witnesses and jurors waiting to be called.

And here is the famous Court Number One, where all the murderers are tried. You push open the oak doors. A huge

silent policeman stands just inside. Another door, a glass-paned one, and you are in the very room where Crippen was sentenced to death, and the Seddons, and Stinie Morrison, and George Joseph Smith; where Oscar Wilde fought his brilliant battle of wits with Sir Edward Carson; where William Joyce was convicted of high treason.

The first thing you notice is that it is very warm and quiet. The air-conditioning, the mellow panelling, the gentle rustle of papers have an almost soporific effect. Somewhere in the distance there is a murmuring sound: you suddenly realise that it comes from the Judge. The jury, who sit near him on his right, lean forward earnestly. From the back of the Court, his words are scarcely audible at all, but you may catch some of them if you listen very carefully.

"... What you have to do is a difficult task. You have to look into this man's *mind* . . . whether he knew at the time when he received this property that it was stolen . . . you can only deduce from the circumstances . . . price he paid . . . market value . . . nature of the property . . . the kind of person he bought it from. . . . If you believe those are the facts, members of the jury . . . take it from me as a matter of law that that is the offence of receiving stolen property. . . . Will you please consider your verdict?"

The Court usher, who wears a black gown over a dark suit, takes the testament from the ledge of the witness-box and mechanically repeats his own special oath:

"I swear by Almighty God that I will well and truly keep this jury in some convenient and private place with such accommodation as the Court direct. I will not suffer anyone to speak to them, neither will I speak to them myself touching the trial held here this day (unless it be to ask them if they are agreed on their verdict), without leave of the Court."

Then he turns and leads the jury away: they all file through a door in the panelled wall at the back of the Bench. The

prisoner is led down some steps behind the dock, to wait in the cells.

The atmosphere of the Court relaxes a little, and you look round. You may glance first up at the dock, which is raised above the rest of the Court to about the same level as the Judge on the Bench. There is the empty chair where the prisoner has been sitting, and, in a corner, another chair at a writing desk for the prison officer (who represents the Governor of Brixton Prison). There is plenty of room in the dock—as well there may be, for it has had to hold as many as twenty prisoners at once. On one occasion each of the accused had a large number pinned to his coat to make him easily identifiable.

The Judge wears a scarlet robe with enormous sleeves, and a particularly neat and tight-fitting wig. "The Red Judge", they call him. He never sits on the central chair on the Bench—that is reserved for the Lord Mayor of London, who is, *ex officio*, the Chief Commissioner of the Central Criminal Court. He is generally, however, represented by an Alderman. Behind the Lord Mayor's chair hangs the coat of arms of the City of London, and the symbolic sword of justice. The Clerk of the Court sits below the Judge—at his feet, as it were. This Clerk wears a wig and gown, and has a high-backed oak seat, on which he sometimes stands to speak to the Judge—turning his back on the Court, his head just peering over the top of the Judge's desk. There are special seats for the barristers and their clerks, for the Press and for the public. The Judge makes his exits and his entrances through a door at the side, which is opened and closed for him by an attendant. A wide red-carpeted corridor leads to the Judge's rooms.

But now the jury are coming back into Court. The prisoner appears again in the dock, and sits down. He looks glum, tense and pale. The Clerk asks the foreman of the jury for their verdict.

"Guilty," comes the answer; everyone stirs a little except the prisoner himself, who is motionless.

"And that is the verdict of you all?"

"Yes." The foreman sits down.

So a police officer is called to give evidence of the defendant's character. (Anything known against him must be strictly excluded until now.) Counsel for the defence makes a short speech in mitigation of the penalty. Then the Judge proceeds to deliver his homily before pronouncing sentence. This homily is addressed to the prisoner himself and to no one else: it is pointed and confidential, and even more difficult to overhear than the summing-up. But there is always something in his formula by which everyone recognises that he is about to pronounce sentence—"the sentence of the Court", as it is always called. So there is a hush, in which his words sound clear and unmistakable.

"The sentence of the Court is that you go to prison for twenty-one months."

The prisoner, who has been standing to receive sentence, turns in response to a touch from the prison officer, crosses the dock and disappears down the steps to await the arrival of a prison van.

And the next case is called.

But on one day in each session you would find a very different scene in the Old Bailey. Petty jurors are being impanelled. This means that, from about two hundred and fifty men and women who have been summoned as jurors and are waiting in Court, groups of thirteen are called by name into the jury box—twelve to form a jury and one reserve in case anyone is sick or absent. Before this process begins, however, the usher shouts:

"Silence! Be upstanding in Court!"

And as they rise, in comes the Lord Mayor, fully arrayed in red robe, gold chain, huge mayoral hat—and following him are the Aldermen, the Sheriff and the Under-Sheriff on duty for the session. They sit down. The jurors sit down too, rather doubtfully. After a short proclamation from the usher, the

Lord Mayor and the Sheriff immediately get up, bow to each other and, somewhat to the astonishment of the assembled jurors, depart and are seen no more. An Alderman takes the central chair in the Bench, and the morning's work starts. The Clerk stands up, takes a card from the box in front of him, and reads the first name.

"City of London thirteen, William John Goldhawk."

"Here."

A figure rises at the back, hurries round the steps on the outside of the dock and is guided by Court officials into the jury box, where he slides up to the end and sits looking virtuously bashful until the next juror arrives. He is soon joined and sustained by "Middlesex seventeen"—and so it goes on. When thirteen have been called, the Alderman addresses them.

"Members of this group, your services will not be required until Tuesday next. Next Tuesday, Court Number Three, at ten-fifty."

This is noted by jurors writing on anything from cigarette packets to neat Morocco diaries. They file out of Court, a mixed assembly who nevertheless appear to have something in common—perhaps it's an air of bewilderment. They are all men and women who pay rates on a house assessed at £20 or more (£30 if they live in London) and have their names on the register of electors; and they are picked out in fairly strict order of liability by the Sheriff of the county, who sends them a "jury summons" that ends with the intimidating words "Hereof fail not at your peril." They will get no money for their services—not even their travelling expenses; jury service has been regarded for a long time (by non-jurors) as one of the privileges of citizenship, providing its own reward. But this may be altered soon, if a Government Bill now before Parliament comes into force. They will then get travelling expenses and compensation for loss of earnings; the maximum will be ten shillings for every four-hour day they spend at the Courts

(whether they actually serve on juries or not), and twenty shillings for every day of more than four hours.

Thus the first day of the session. On the last, at about twenty minutes to five, when City workers are beginning to hurry home, the bus queues are growing, and the paper-sellers are perhaps shouting in the dusk the latest news from this very Court, an ancient ceremony is being performed inside. The whole assembly are on their feet, and the spirit of the King's Courts is being proclaimed once more in the words of the black-gowned usher—words used at this Court since 1834 at the close of every session:

“All persons who have anything further to do before my Lords the King's Justices of Oyer and Terminer and General Gaol Delivery for the jurisdiction of the Central Criminal Court may depart hence, and give their attendance here on Tuesday morning, the 23rd of June, at 10.30. *God Save the King.*”



FLEET STREET

It is entirely appropriate that the newspaper business, whose task is predominantly the dissemination of gossip and rumour on the scale of modern industrial technique, should have settled down in Fleet Street, which has always thrived on gossip and whose essential life has always been carried on over the back fence and in the taproom. As has been said, a news-editor is a man with an infinite capacity for being surprised: that is to say, he is a man with an infinite lack of sophistication, capable of amazement at everything which transcends the narrow range of his prejudices and his experience.

Psychologically, Fleet Street is still a suburb, as once it was in reality—lying just outside the City gates, it was known for centuries as “the suburb of London”—for it is in the suburb, with its perpetual sense of the second-rate, that the appetite for sensation flourishes most vigorously. The murder of a local nobody is always better news than a catastrophe involving thousands at the ends of the earth, and multiple births at home rate more space than the fall of foreign dynasties.

But if Fleet Street is a suburb, it is a suburb which has suffered from ribbon development. It lies on the direct route from Westminster to the City, and close to that still more important traffic artery, the Thames, and thus enjoys the additional advantage—from the viewpoint of collecting gossip—of being in touch with, but independent of, both commerce and government. Furthermore, this has made it the scene of countless processions (including the coronation procession of Queen Elizabeth) and of many other excitements, such as the rebellions of Wat Tyler in 1381, of Sir Thomas Wyatt in 1554, of the Gordon Riots in 1780 and many more. In short, Fleet Street

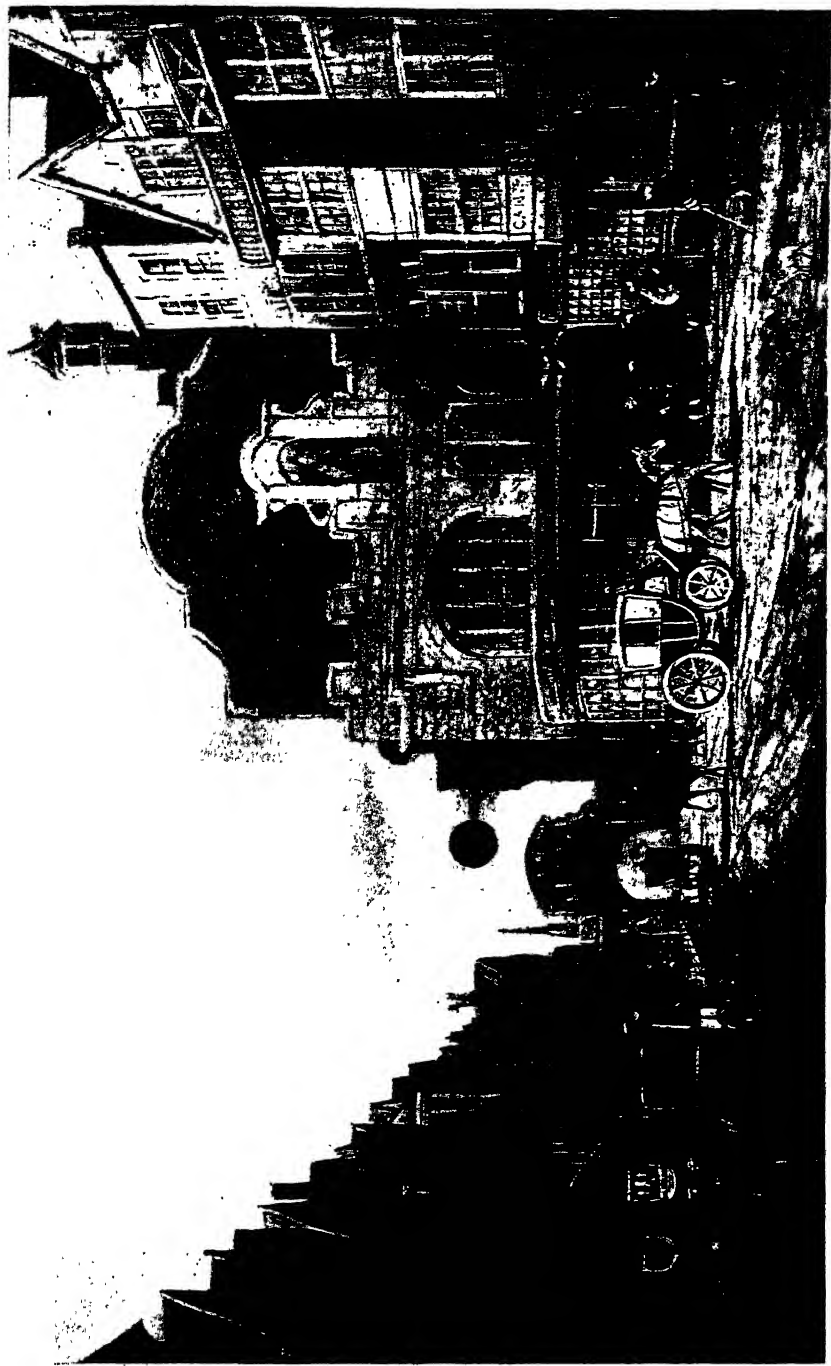


is much more than a "quarter" specialised to a particular trade: it is an epitome of the domestic affairs of London.

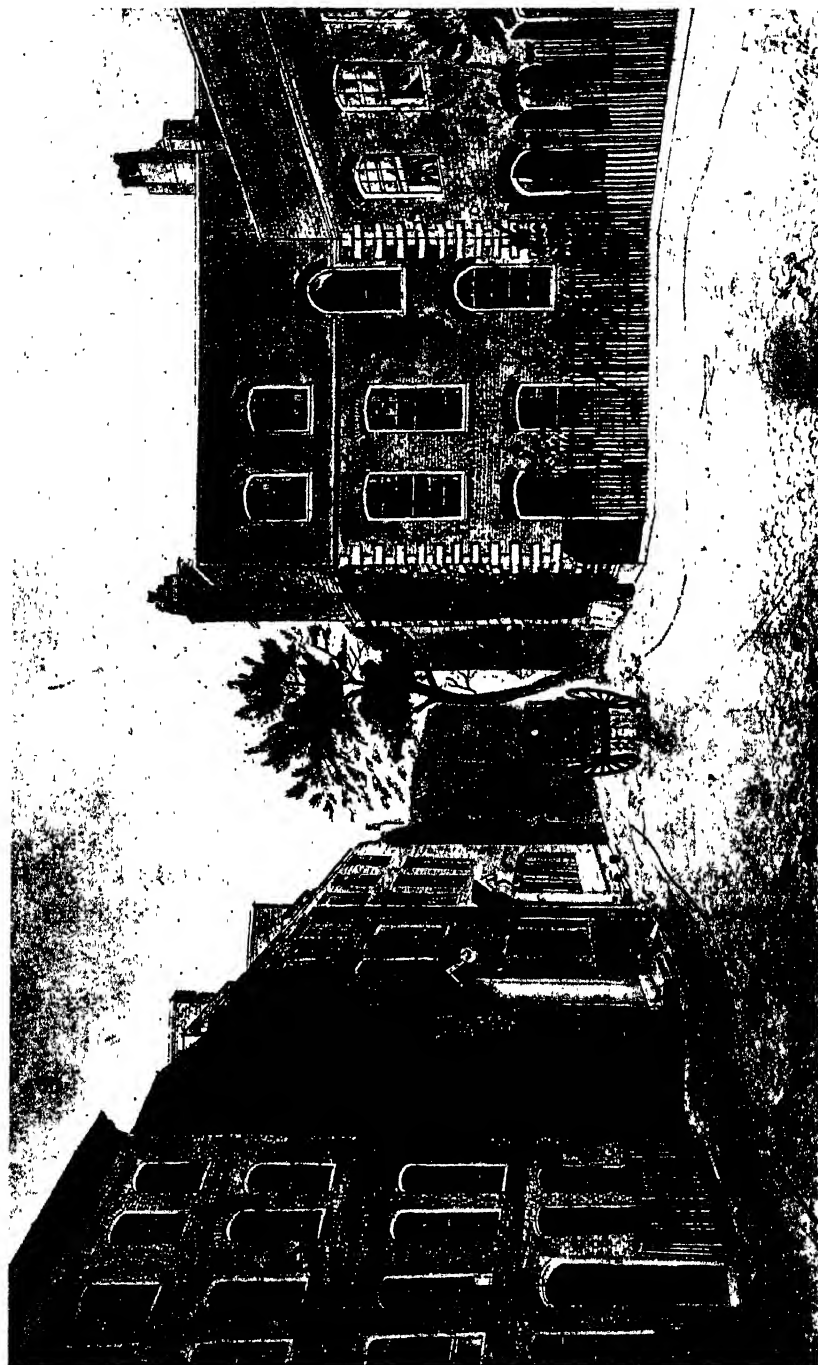
The prelates' palaces and religious foundations which sprang up there in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were gradually swamped by inns and shops, and above all by the shops of printers and booksellers. From these last we can trace an almost continuous descent to the giant rotaries of today, re-duplicating titbits for the breakfast tables of the whole country at 36,000 copies an hour. And while the character of the modern street is dominated by the traffic of the mass-circulation dailies, the traces of the earlier pre-mechanical Fleet Street crop up everywhere with the pertinacity of grass thrusting through cracks in the pavement.

If, then, you visit Fleet Street you will be able to see for yourself the trucks unloading their hundred miles of paper at the offices of the great Sundays and dailies; the miniature tankers feeding printing-ink through plump hoses to the press-rooms; the vans curvetting away through the traffic with the finished product. You will find the black-glass aquarium of the *Daily Express* and the steel-framed monolith of Reuter's framing a fine view of St. Paul's. A sortie into Shoe Lane will show you the acres of annihilation which so nearly engulfed Fleet Street during the second Great Fire of London, in 1940. A little exploration will take you into Bouverie Street and Tudor Street, past the offices of half a dozen more papers, and so to Printing House Square and the offices of *The Times*. I need only mention how the early development of the railways, combined with the comparatively small size of the country, led to the unique development of a "national" press, attempting to supply the whole country with news, in competition with locally operated papers, to give you the necessary background for these explorations.

So let me tell you rather of that earlier Fleet Street of Johnson and Pepys, of Chaucer and Milton, which you cannot find



*Fleet Street looking towards Temple Bar, 1754*



*Printing House Square in 1794*

so readily for yourself, but which always lies so closely behind the Fleet Street of my Lords Kemsley and Camrose, Beaverbrook and Rothermere.

The range of association is tremendous—although Fleet Street being primarily a street of inns and shops, its inhabitants dwelt for the most part in the streets and courts adjoining. Thus Chancery Lane recalls for us William Hazlitt, desperately in love with his lodging-house keeper's daughter, "the Madonna-like Sarah Walker"; and Lamb; and a young man called Coleridge, in a moment of despair, seeing a notice asking for "smart lads for the Light Dragoons" and joining the army. Fetter Lane means for us Tom Paine and Hobbes, Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, and Praise-God Barebones, John Wesley founding the Methodist movement and Keir Hardie founding the Labour Party. Crane Court suggests Sir Isaac Newton lecturing to the Royal Society, and later Coleridge lecturing to the Philosophical Society in the same house.

Cross over into the Temple—that is, the former abode of the Knights Templar, a militant religious order founded in the twelfth century—and the associations are even more numerous: Charles Lamb, at 4 Inner Temple Lane; Thackeray in his chambers at 10 Crown Office Row; Goldsmith writing *The Deserted Village* at 2 Brick Court, and here dying at the age of forty-five. ("Is your mind at rest?" asked Dr. Turton, who attended him. "No, it is not," he replied and did not speak again.) It was in the Temple, too, that Dr. Johnson was living when at the age of fifty-three he first met the twenty-two-year-old Boswell in Davies's bookshop in Covent Garden. Five centuries earlier, King John was living there when, in 1215, the barons came to him and "demanded the liberties and laws of King Edward, with others for themselves, the King and the Church"—a demand later known as Magna Charta.

Turn back into Fleet Street and you see a tavern named Peele's: formerly it was Peele's coffee house, frequented by

Macaulay, Cobbett, the Duke of Wellington, Nollekens, Dickens. But I dare not start on the coffee houses—Nando's, the Grecian, Dick's, the Rainbow, the Southampton, Palgrave's Head. . . . There were seventeen of them, starting with the Rainbow in 1657, which makes it the second-oldest coffee house in London. (James Farr, the founder, was brought to court for "makeinge and selling of a drink called coffee whereby in makeinge the same he annoyeth his neighbours by evil smells. . .".) Addison mentions the Rainbow in the *Tatler*, as also he does Dick's, and instantly we remember Steele disputing precedence on the stairs; Thackeray; and Cowper, throwing down the paper in a fit of passion and rushing out "determined to poison himself in the first secluded ditch".

Salisbury Square suggests Richardson, writing Pamela's interminable letters; Locke, dating from this spot his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*; Dryden, writing *All for Love*, *Absalom and Ahitophel*, *Marriage à la Mode*, and other works in the happy days before the Glorious Revolution stripped him of his laureateship.

Shoe Lane speaks to us of Richard Lovelace, "the most amiable and beautiful person that ever eye beheld", living in Gunpowder Alley, after spending everything he had in the King's cause, just as St. Bride's Church opposite brings up the figure of Pepys, who was baptised there; of Milton, there deserted by his wife; of Winkyn de Worde buried there.

But above all, of course, Fleet Street means for us Johnson and his circle: Johnson, compulsively touching the massy posts which separated pedestrian from traffic, as he walked down the street; Johnson dining the gay young Mrs. Lennox; Johnson carrying a prostitute home on his back, when he found her all but dying at 2 a.m.; Johnson, awakened at 3 a.m. by "Lanky" and "Bozzy", coming to the door with a poker in his hand and crying delightedly as he recognised his friends: "What, is it you, you dogs? I'll have a frisk with you!" and Johnson buying

oysters for his cat, Hodge. And with Johnson, Garrick, Reynolds, Fanny Burney, Goldsmith, Burke, Baretti and the rest.

But what I should like to try and convey is not so much the number and splendour of Fleet Street's associations as their continuity, and their essentially domestic, even suburban nature. In the annals of Fleet Street, these men are remembered much less as famous authors than as men who got drunk, prayed, fell into debt, despaired, made friends and enemies and tried occasionally to seize in words the wonder and the terror of existence in the world which men make for themselves.

When we think of Richardson, it is not as the author of that first and most terrifyingly sadistic of psychological novels, *Clarissa Harlowe*, but as a printer who hid half-crowns among the type to reward early-arriving apprentices, and who once lent Johnson £5 18s. when the bailiffs were in his house because he had not paid for the brandy in which he administered opium to his pain-racked wife. When we think of Izaak Walton, it is not as the author of *The Compleat Angler*, but as the linen-draper whose shop stood a couple of doors from Chancery Lane and who was a most active vestryman of the parish. When we think of Goldsmith, it is not as the author of *She Stoops to Conquer*, but as the man who, with his wig on back to front, played blind-man's-buff to the disturbance of Blackstone labouring at his commentaries in the room below.

And so it is with places and things. Temple Bar, the entry to the Liberty (where Wren's gate stood until 1878, and where the King still stops to ask permission from the Lord Mayor to "pass Temple Bar"), appears in history chiefly as an obstruction to traffic—people *would* park their sedan chairs there. Even the Fleet Ditch, from whose bridge the street takes its name, has been of moment to the inhabitants chiefly because it stank so vilely. The Carmelites were complaining about it in 1290 and the complaints went on more or less continuously until it was closed over in 1766. Swift was one of

those whom it annoyed—

Sweepings from butchers' stalls, dung, guts and blood,  
Drowned puppies, stinking sprats, all drenched in mud,  
Dead cats and turnip tops, come tumbling down the flood

was his summary of it; and Pope, another acidulous fellow, pointed out the appropriateness of the Fleet Ditch "rolling its large tribute of dead dogs to Thames" as a suitable setting for the gutter press of his day.

Here strip, my children, here at once leap in,  
Here prove who best can dash through thick and thin.  
And who the most in love of dirt excel . . .

Today it is underground and only officials of the London County Council are found in it: but they, it is said, can walk up it all the way to Hampstead.

It was the river, of course, which gave its name to the Fleet Prison, first mentioned in 1197. We think of it now as a debtors' prison, but it was not always so: Dr. John Donne of St. Paul's, for instance, was committed to it for marrying without his father's consent, and the Earl of Pembroke found himself in it for getting the Dark Lady of the Sonnets into trouble.

If I could conduct you round the Street myself, I should take you straight to the *Cheshire Cheese* and create a suitable frame of mind by filling you with beer and Johnsonian anecdotes. Going in by either of the narrow courts which flank it, we should find ourselves in a cramped, sawdusted dispense, with an adjoining room where the vertical drinking is done; opening off it is the main dining-room. We should sit in wooden pews on either side of the table and you would see the brass plate marking the seat which Dr. Johnson is alleged to have used. This may be strictly true, for it is said that Johnson's seat was imported from his favourite house,

the *Mitre*, which lay on the other side of the street where Hoare's Bank now stands; but there is no direct evidence that Johnson ever used the *Cheese*. On the other hand, since he lived for eleven years at Gough Square, just behind, it is probable enough that he may have. Next to the *Mitre*, Johnson preferred the *Devil* (properly the *Devil and St. Dunstan's*) a little higher up, and this was also one of Pepys's haunts.

Johnson, of course, is not the only well-known writer associated with the *Cheese*. Thackeray and Dickens used it, and George Augustus Sala, who after a fortnight in Paris sampling all the resources of French cooking (and describing them in glowing terms to his readers in the *Daily Telegraph*) once burst into the *Cheese* crying "William, a Rotherham steak, some potatoes in their jackets and a pint of ale—I've not tasted *food* for a fortnight!" And in the 'nineties, in an upper room, Yeats, Dowson and other members of the Rhymers' Club used to meet.

Had you come before the war, I should have ordered you the famous beefsteak pudding, containing not only beef but larks and oysters: as originally made, it weighed 96 lb. and the smell was reputedly perceptible as far away as the Stock Exchange. As a matter of fact, if I had been able to show you Fleet Street before the war, I should probably have taken you to lunch not at the *Cheese* but at the *Cock*, higher up on the other side. (You remember Tennyson's apostrophe to "The Plump Headwaiter at the *Cock*".) Here the speciality of the house was chicken, steak, mushroom and oyster pie—baked, not boiled like the pudding at the *Cheese*. The *Cock*, until its transfer from the other side of the road in 1877, was the oldest tavern in Fleet Street, being definitely known to exist in Elizabeth's day, but latterly it has passed into the hands of a large firm of caterers and has lost much of its old character.

The *Cock* was also a haunt of Pepys: on April 13, 1688, for instance, he took the beautiful Mrs. Knipp there—the actress



of whom his wife was so jealous. "Thence by water to the Temple and thence to the *Cock* alehouse and drank and eat a lobster, and sang, and mighty merry." Coming out of the *Cock*, I could have pointed out the church of St. Dunstan, where Tyndale once used to preach; the building is modern but the clock with its "striking jacks" dates from 1671, while the figure of Queen Elizabeth and the statue of King Lud and his sons are sixteenth-century and come from the Ludgate which used to stand on Ludgate Hill. I might also have pointed out Child's Bank, No. 1 Fleet Street, where, among others, Oliver Cromwell and "Mistress Eleanor Gwynne" kept their accounts—in the latter case, a £6,900 overdraft.

But since I have taken you to the *Cheese* and thus introduced the subject of Johnson, I may as well take you straight on to Gough Square and show you the house where he wrote the Dictionary. Going up Wine Office Court, one emerges into a depressing scene of bombed desolation with No. 17, miraculously preserved, standing next to vacancy. A V.I falling near by shook the house violently and blew out some of the crown-glass panes, while many incendiaries and an oil bomb fell upon the roof. Though damage was done to the fittings by water, the structure remains sound. There I shall introduce you to Mrs. Rowell, who, with her mother before her, has been curator since Lord Harmsworth bought the house in 1914, when it was being used as a paper store. Whatever question you raise about Johnson, Mrs. Rowell can quote you chapter and verse and tell you, I will hazard, more about the matter than you know yourself.

The house, with its beautifully proportioned rooms and fireplaces, would be agreeable to live in to this day, with the simple addition of a bathroom. It contains various Johnsoniana, but what will interest you most, I think, are the portraits: especially those of Johnson as a young man and as a baby. It is eerie to see in the brooding sensuality of the youth the

powerful and dogmatic personality of the adult. There are pictures, too, of Mrs. Lennox, of Fanny Burney, and of Kitty Fisher. You remember the nursery rhyme about Kitty Fisher and the hard-hearted Lucy Locket (she was a barmaid at the *Rainbow*)? If not, Mrs. Rowell will tell you the story.

I shall enjoy this part of our excursion, but I shall hardly care to walk through the Temple with you—it has been so sorely damaged by bombs. Temporary huts have sprung up in some of the courts and the fountain which charmed Lamb no longer plays. Worse than this, because irreparable, is the destruction of the roof of Middle Temple Hall, the finest piece of Elizabethan craftsmanship in London. It was in this hall that on February 2nd, 1602, “a play called *Twelve Night or What You Will*, much like the *Comedy of Errors* or *Menechmi in Plautus*” was enacted, some six months after its first appearance at the Globe. Happily, the round church of the Templars, consecrated in 1185, is still standing, though the chancel, added in 1240, is seriously damaged. In this church Henry III wept for the death of his tutor, Pembroke, and here Edward I was proclaimed king.

I have already mentioned some of the Temple's more distinguished permanent literary residents, such as Goldsmith, Thackeray and Lamb, but if you will walk with me down to the gardens where, if Shakespeare is to be trusted, York and Lancaster chose the white rose and the red, I can mention more of those who have been educated here: Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Thomas Overbury, Ford, Wycherly and Congreve, Shadwell and Southern, William Blackstone and Edmund Burke, these from the Middle Temple; and from the Inner, Judge Jeffreys, Cowper, Sir Christopher Hatton and the poet Beaumont, to name no more.

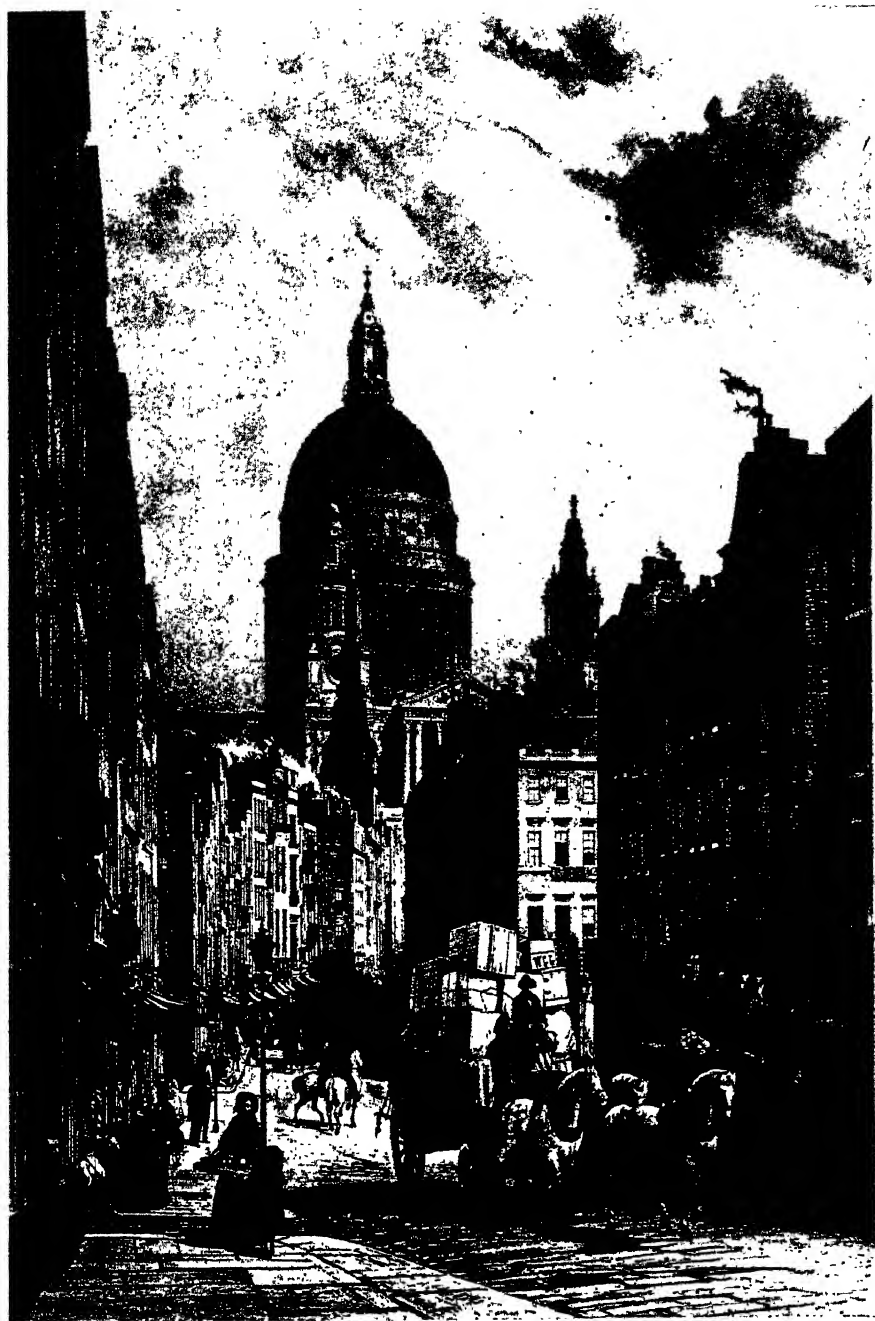
If we pass through Essex Court, I shall probably remember Porson, staggering home drunk and falling on the floor with a thud which awakened Gurney (the Baron) in his chambers

underneath. Fig Court will probably set me off on the story of Cowper's elaborately unsuccessful attempts at suicide. "He purchased laudanum, then threw it away. He packed his portmanteau to go to France and enter a monastery. He went down to the Custom House Quay, to throw himself into the river. He tried to stab himself. At last the poor fellow actually hanged himself." But the noose—it was in fact his garter—broke, and the thud of his fall brought the laundress to inquire if he was well, as was no doubt intended.

If we leave by Middle Temple Lane I shall tell you about the five rows of legless skeletons lying in the earth to the west of the gate—Carmelites, almost certainly, whose legs were removed by builders underpinning the house, when the gate was set back from the road. But perhaps it would be better to go out into Tudor Street and so through Salisbury Square to St. Bride's. Here we shall again find ourselves in the newspaper district: the unforgettable, warm, pungent smell of newsprint wafts from the buildings with a distant clacking of machinery, and bales of papers swoop down polished wooden chutes to be transferred to the waiting vans.

It will be a sad enough task showing you St. Bride's. The tower—Henley's "madrigal in stone"—still stands; it is the tallest of any City church and perhaps Wren's finest. But the nave is gutted, the glass blown to tatters. So I shall not be able to take you inside, through the dark porch into the brilliant interior, lit by clerestories. I can only tell you how Pepys came here in 1664 to choose a place for his brother to lie, and how the gravemaker cheerfully promised to "jostle them together" to make room for him; and remind you that Wynkyn de Worde is buried here.

Of de Worde, who was Caxton's pupil, we are not especially proud: he was a wretched printer. Once for instance, when resetting a book he failed to notice that a page was missing and carried straight over the gap. In any case he was not the



*Fleet Street in the nineteenth century*



*Morning Post*



*Morning Advertiser*



*The Guardian*



*The Standard*



*The Examiner*



*The Spectator*



*The Observer*



*The Sunday Times*



*The Times*



*Morning Chronicle*



*Morning Herald*



*The Courier*



*The Weekly Dispatch*



*Life in London*



*The New Weekly Messenger*



*The Old Weekly Messenger*

Early nineteenth-century caricatures of London Journals

first letterpress printer in the liberty, for one William de Machlinia had started printing law books, unfortunately undated, some time before his death in 1492. Moreover, the Street's association with books goes back far earlier than printing. In 1311, for instance, five Welshmen were seized for robbing "Dionysia le Bokebyndere in her house in Fletestrete in the suburbs of London",

We know the names of them all: Henry VIII's printer, Richard Pynson, a superb craftsman; Griffith, who printed the first English tragedy, *Gorboduc*, at the sign of the Falcon; Tottel, who printed *Romeus and Juliet* (from which Shakespeare drew his *Romeo*) at the Hand and Star; Hodgets, at the Flower de Luce in Fetter Lane from 1601, printing the plays of Dekker, Heywood, Webster, Day; Thomas Fisher at the White Hart who sold the first copies of *A Midsommer night's dreame*. And here again we get the extraordinary continuity: from Tottel, printing at No. 7, Fleet Street (as it now is) we can trace the succession down through Yetsweirt, who succeeded him in 1594, and through Jaggard to Joel Stephens, who succeeded in the time of George I, and so to the Butterworths—three and a half centuries of unbroken history until the house was rebuilt in 1899. Here too we get the inevitable domestic touch: as long ago as 1518 we find Robert Copland at the sign of the Rose Garland complaining that publishing is not what it was: "bokes be not set by; there time is past I gesse."

Between this world and the contemporary world of endlessly reduplicated sensation there is always one perdurable link: the pubs. The pubs are the indicator of Fleet Street's interest in conviviality, in other people's lives, and, not to put too fine a point on it, in gossip. It is therefore no accident that Fleet Street has always supported a phenomenal number of pubs: there were thirty-seven, not counting those in side streets, under the early Georges, and the number was increased later.

And behind the enormous change in technical methods lies an unchanging psychology. There is nothing unfamiliar to us in Byron's complaint: "London journalists have no merit but practice and impudence"; in the still earlier sarcasm of Goldsmith: "You must not imagine that they who compile these papers have any actual knowledge of the politics or government of the State; they only collect their materials from the oracle of some coffee house, which oracle has himself gathered them the night before from a beau at a gaming table, who has pillaged his knowledge from a great man's porter, who has had his information from the great man's gentleman, who has invented the whole story for his own amusement the night preceding"; or Swift's comment on the penny newspaper stamp of 1712: "No more ghosts or murders now for love or money!" And we can hardly detect the difference between the modern newsbill telling of violence or sensation and the cry of the eighteenth-century newsboy: "Extraordinary Gazette! Bloody News!"



*John Herbert*

## LONDON'S PORT AND RIVER

*Drawings by John Minton*

Sometimes it is with mixed feelings that we visit for the first time one of the great cities of the world. Though wishing to see the sights, the completion of a mere Baedeker list of churches and palaces, parks and art galleries, is liable not only to leave us exhausted, but to deny us any knowledge of the disposition of the people and their way of life; our stay may be a short one, and we may miss those features which are of fundamental interest and importance through not knowing where to begin.

But London should not cause these difficulties. When asked "Is it to be Westminster Abbey or Buckingham Palace



first?" my answer is now automatic: "Start with the Port of London". This may seem a tall order, for the limits of the Port stretch from beyond Southend as far as Teddington, fully sixty-nine miles; moreover, it may be winter and the prospect of taking a trip on the Thames prove too chilly. But there is no cause for alarm. If it is winter, or the pleasure steamers are not running, you will not be disappointed if you spend a little while on one of the lower bridges. But if it is summer you can take one of the new waterbuses running from Greenwich, and by changing at Charing Cross continue as far as Putney. This service during its first year (1948) proved immensely popular with Londoners, for whom access to the river had hitherto been slight, many now using it for going to and from work; in this way London River is reclaiming its historic role as a "great street".

To appreciate a country fully it is necessary to know a little of her past, for there lies the clue to her position among the nations of the world. Since earliest times the Port of London has measured as accurately as a barometer the ebb and flow of the Kingdom's fortunes. Her geographical position in relation to the Continent, the disposition of her people, and the facilities available to merchantmen decreed early that London would be not only our capital but a great port. Our natural reliance on trade, and the enterprising policy of Alfred in the ninth and Elizabeth in the sixteenth century, confirmed the Venerable Bede's description of London in A.D. 605 as a "market for many nations repairing to them by land and sea". Much later the work of Walpole in the realm of Free Trade, and the rising demand for British goods during the nineteenth century, gave London a march over other ports, eventually establishing her as the largest port in the world. But for the ordinary visitor today it will be the grandeur of the Port, the amazing diversity of its character, and its strange beauty that will prove so fascinating.

Once it was customary for distinguished visitors to make their entry into London by water. Embarking at Gravesend, they were escorted up river in the barges of the Lord Mayor and City Companies; apple orchards then bordered the river; woods and fields offered Royalty the hunting they desired, and Greenwich Palace a change from London life. As the "trots" of merchantmen grew thicker the extent of British trade revealed itself, till finally, as the spires of the city churches came into view, the procession arrived at the Tower of London.

But today few travellers come by river farther than Tilbury, so let us get our first impression by watching for a time on Waterloo Bridge what is going on.

Waterloo Bridge, opened in 1945, has still a virgin whiteness, but even with the passage of time London smuts will not be able to mar its simple dignity. Reaching across a bend in the river it enables us to look up King's Reach towards Westminster and down through Blackfriars, Southwark and London Bridges to the Pool. It is here that the Port first started, and it was to their settlement here that the Celts gave the name Llyn-din, meaning "the hill by the pool". In those days the river did not run swiftly, but now it rips into the Pool, and with it come innumerable tugs, each one with her string of barges. Thames tugs are pleasant creatures, but vary enormously in character; some are squat and tiny, but from the thunder of their diesel engines obviously possess enormous power; others are rather tall and have a spinsterish air about them, although their tow of six 200-ton lighters refutes such a criticism; some have gaily-coloured funnels, and a few just have a vent, but whatever their appearance, they all look intensely proud as they come bustling down the river, talking to each other by siren, in a language incomprehensible to most of us. They can rightly be pleased with themselves, for the work which they do is highly skilled. Without their efficient service the Port could not survive.

By the end of the eighteenth century the pressure of trade was enormous and the state of the Port chaotic. After a series of agitations by merchants and shipowners, the decision was taken to build what are now the West India Docks, and soon the demand for the efficient reception and storage of goods necessitated six other systems—the East India, the London, the St. Katharine, the Surrey Commercial, the Victoria and Albert, and Tilbury Docks—stretching over a distance of twenty-eight miles. Owing to the uncoordinated way in which the private companies were operated, the depression of the eighteen-seventies and the intense rivalry amongst the various interests concerned, the Port by 1900 was once again in a bad way. It was not until 1909 that differences were settled and the Port of London Authority was set up to administer the whole Port in the public interest.

The dock systems are very different in size and outward appearance; but over them all floats an air of romance, the product of centuries of association with exotic cargoes from distant lands. Each system possesses facilities for a defined range of goods: storage at constant temperatures, handling by travelling cranes, conveyer-belts or trolleys, and professional advice from men who have spent a lifetime studying one particular trade. At the St. Katharine are stored curios, spices, ivory, rum and other spirits. The London Docks are renowned primarily for their vast stone-pillared wine-vaults, each one heavy with wine fumes and deathly still save for the gas jets hissing at each end; the purpose of these flickering flames is to preserve the wine at a constant temperature, but it is the dancing shadows produced by them playing on the great wine barrels that affect one so profoundly. In the London Docks, too, are the wool warehouses, providing the north light required for grading the different varieties of wool. To the West India and Millwall Docks go fruit, sugar, hardwoods and grain. From the top of one of the grain silos we



can look across to the Surrey Commercial; this is the only dock system situated on the South Bank and handles the softwoods trade from Scandinavia and Canada. The night of the great fire-blitz, September 9th, 1940, will never be forgotten by those who were on duty here.

On arrival, ships are berthed at particular docks according to their size, the number of ships in port, and the nature of their predominant cargo. Other ships, if they are not restricted by their draught, and are serving a single customer owning a riverside warehouse, may go alongside one of the private wharves as far up as London Bridge.

The Royal Docks are the largest in the Port and the most outstanding example of the good work of the P.L.A., comprising the Victoria and Albert and, since 1921, the King George V; this "trinity" is now the largest single area of dock



water in the world, and the nucleus of the Port. If we stand at the top of the Royal Victoria we can see half a million tons of shipping lying stem to stern in neat array.

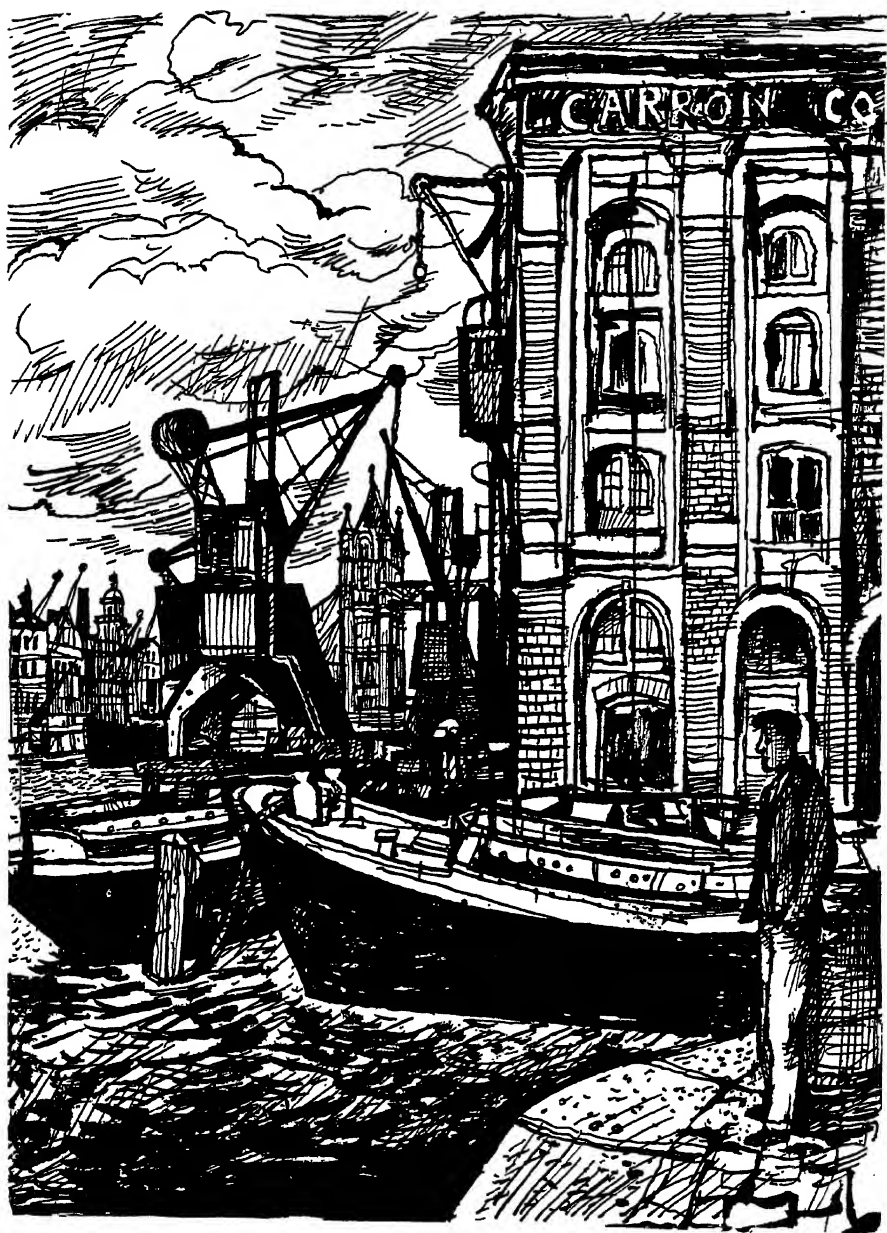
Many of these ships have landed passengers at Tilbury, fifteen miles lower down, and are now unloading cargoes of meat, tobacco, or butter. Along the outboard side of each ship are barges, or "dumb" lighters, as they are called. These nestle their blunt noses beneath the parent ship like piglets around a sow; every now and then the slight swell of the dock rocks them, their iron sides booming or clanging according to whether they are loaded or not. Into them stevedores are lowering goods bound for one of the riverside merchants, factories, or other dock systems.

In the last century the majority of lighters relied on no other motive power but the tide. However with the acceler-



ation of industry and the advent of cheap power transport, the gallant sight of a single lighter making up river on the flood tide has faded from the river scene. We can still, however, enjoy the consummate art of the tug-masters and lightermen. From Waterloo Bridge it is fun to watch the tugs head up into the stream, drop barges off so that they drift and are secured to the nearest trot by a single lighterman, or hitch a couple to her tow as if they were pieces of driftwood. And in the docks, lightermen still, on occasion, "shift berth" by alternately running fore and aft with a "carline" (a section of the hatchway covers) which they hold up as a sail.

At Brentford, fifteen miles west of Tower Bridge, in surroundings which we might presume to be countryside, this proficiency can be seen to perfection. For Brentford is the terminus of trade, and, as it is impracticable for tugs to work against the stream, high water generally means half an hour of feverish activity: as many as twenty tugs with their tows may arrive and *départ* in quick succession. Tooting to each other they turn round abreast the entrance to the Grand Union Canal, still among the most peaceful and romantic waterways in England, and wait their turn in the queue. To the onlooker on the towing path opposite, the scene is one of noise and confusion, the barges lying at all angles, wallowing in the wash of numerous tugs, the ringing of their sides adding to the cacophony of long and short blasts of the sirens and the shouts and acknowledgments of the lightermen. But in contrast there is the care with which each tugmaster, without damaging his vessel, coaxes his charges by occasional kicks of his propeller into the pack of barges; the efficient way in which the lightermen cast off the barges at his order and simultaneously secure the new tow—each manœuvre taking place amid the utmost congestion but with the minimum of fuss. With the tide now on the turn the accompanying stream of tugs steams off hurriedly, the lightermen adjust the





heavy cable-laid ropes so that the barges lie easily alongside each other and then gather at the stern to light their cigarettes and chat.

But returning from Brentford, the western extremity of the working port, we stand once again on Waterloo Bridge, and look this time not down river to the Pool but up river towards Westminster. Although at the time of writing the grand sweep of King's Reach and Victoria Embankment is offset by the dinginess of the Surrey shore, the South Bank Development Scheme is designed to transform this legacy of Victorian days into a pleasant open space. The historic Shot Tower on the South Bank is to remain and will provide a pleasant link with the past. Here is the site of the 1951 Exhibition and here eventually will be built our National Theatre. Beyond Charing Cross Bridge there is nothing of special interest till County Hall, an imposing twentieth-century "Renaissance" building, the headquarters of the London County Council. For over twenty-five years it has stood looking cautiously across the river to the Houses of Parliament, and although its walls have their scars of the blitz, nothing has seriously shaken this stronghold of local government and the administrators who sit within. Beyond County Hall we can just see the pavilions of St. Thomas's Hospital, each one connected by an arcade, stretching into the distance. This hospital, built in the middle of the last century, was repeatedly hit and fearfully damaged by bombs during the war but was never knocked out completely.

On the other side of the river stands the Palace of Westminster, dominated by Big Ben whose chimes gave such hope to Europe during the war. Standing here beside the river it symbolises for the world the strength and continuity of British democratic government, a conception stimulated in each one of us by widely different impressions: the famous terrace, crowded in summer with visitors eating strawberries and cream,

but in winter the lonely beat of a solitary policeman; the Speaker's steps which in the past have afforded members a convenient escape from tyrannical monarchs; and at night the light in the clock tower, telling ordinary citizens that the House is still sitting and that legislators are working late.

Along the riverside there are many "stairs" dating from Pepys's day, when everyone went by water; each landing-place took its name from the tavern that was immediately built to serve those landing or waiting to embark. Nowadays the façade of warehouses, docks and factories is only relieved by the bow-windowed saloons of these riverside pubs. Inside they provide a refreshing change from the grim business of everyday life, embodying an atmosphere of maturity and detachment from international bickerings, of immutability and peace; this atmosphere is fostered not only by their proximity to the water, but also by countless historic and æsthetic attractions. More often than not their appearance from the street is commonplace, as we shall see if we walk down from Tower Hill into dockland. It is to the river and those who sail on it that they give their real welcome. The bright-green sign, the black-and-white timbers, the geraniums flowering on the veranda: these brighten the aspect of the river front, and invite the sailor ashore.

Leading off from the Tower towards the Docks is Ratcliffe Highway. This was once a street notorious as a haunt of river pirates and smugglers, but now, contrary to expectation, its shadows are above suspicion. Policemen no longer walk here in pairs and even Limehouse has an air of comparative respectability now. But before the first World War this quarter, often known as Chinatown because of its Asiatic element, was notorious; and as an example, Charlie Brown's, or the *Blue Posts* pub near the entrance to the West India Docks—still a lively house, where sailors make merry with an accordion and sea shanties—was once associated with illicit drug-peddling. But even by day you may be uneasy



despite my reassurance, and feel as we continue down the dark cobblestoned street, bordered on one side by the high wall of the St. Katharine Docks, that we are being unnecessarily adventurous. During the day it is noisy with lorries and drays, but at night the silence here is sepulchral, the darkness being relieved by only an occasional street lamp, so intermittent that not more than a few yards of cobbles are lit up by each one—cranes and warehouses beyond fading from mere shadowy outline into obscurity. This dramatic, stygian dimness ends abruptly with the blaze of light from the *Prospect of Whitby*.

This is one of the gayest pubs of London River, and has a history as vivid as a detective story. Here Pepys dined with his wife; Lord Sandwich, of sandwich fame, brought his card-playing friends; and Judge Jeffreys watched the corpses of criminals whom he had sentenced to be hanged being “washed” by three tides—as a general warning to the public.



The *Prospect* took its name from the famous barges, which used to sail from Whitby with cargoes of Yorkshire "jet" and unload at the yard next door. Their magnificent red sails can still occasionally be seen brailed up below the *Prospect's* windows, completing a composition which Whistler loved to paint. Half a mile farther down-stream is the *Grapes*, characterised by Charles Dickens in *Our Mutual Friend* as the *Six Jolly Fellowship Porters*. There is endless fascination in wandering among the docks and warehouses in this casual fashion, coming suddenly on the old river pubs and the old river stairs leading abruptly to the water, or at low tide to a few yards of beach, which though not sandy may be of gravel, and firm enough for a few children to play on.

But now it is time to visit Tilbury Docks, twenty-five miles down river. This system proved at first to be a "white elephant", but it is now, thanks to the work of the Port of

London Authority, the destination of many cargo-passenger liners plying to and from the Empire.

Tilbury is always a welcome sight to the sailor because it means that his voyage is nearly over; for us, though, it is the continual movement of ships that is significant. Liners waiting their turn to disembark passengers, nursed in the meanwhile by the smart "Sun" and "Cock" tugs; tiny pilot boats bobbing to and fro from Royal Terrace Pier where sits the "Ruler of Pilots"; small, dingy tramp steamers, large, smart cargo boats, ugly "flatirons" bound for London's Power Stations, L.C.C. sewage steamers and the inevitable tugs with their strings of barges, all steaming by, "sailing on the tide" up river for London or outward bound for foreign ports. London has the largest entrepôt trade in the world and many of the ships sail between London and the coastal ports such as Leith, Glasgow or Newcastle. These small freighters often have accommodation for one or two passengers, for whom any discomfort that the North Sea may bring is fully compensated by the interest of the voyage.

Tacking up the river, regardless of them all, may be a number of Thames sailing-barges, their rusty-coloured sails full-bellied with wind; these begin to slat as the diminutive figure on the stern puts his vessel about, while from her rigging comes the persistent humming of the wind and the creak of her blocks as she gathers way on the new tack. Crewed only by a man and boy, these barges carry their 100- to 300-ton cargoes of bricks, cement and wood between London and the East Coast ports, often sailing up river as far as Tower Bridge. They remain for the moment the sole reminder of the days of sail when clippers brought tea from China, and windjammers raced from Australia with grain.

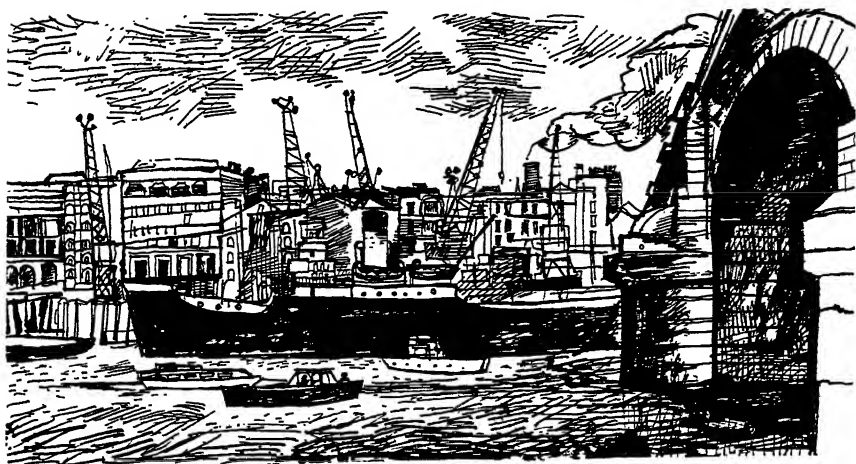
I said earlier that the best way to see the Port is from the deck of a small boat. Greenwich is the place to go aboard, for from the river the Palace, that now serves as the Royal Naval



College, is one of the most impressive sights imaginable. In the summer, to add a touch of contemporary colour, the beach in front is crowded with children for whom it serves as the seaside; although the foreshore is noisy with excited yells, envious eyes are cast as the paddle steamer "Royal Eagle" or the fine new diesel ship "Royal Sovereign", black with trippers, sails by, bound for the open sea. These ships belong to the day excursion service run by the General Steam Navigation Company near Tower Bridge. From Whitsun to the end of September they provide a very good cheap day's outing, visiting Southend and Clacton, or Margate and Ramsgate. Before the war the G.S.N.'s fleet consisted only of paddle-steamers, derisively nicknamed "Butterfly Boats" by deep-sea sailormen, but in both wars they have done noble service—the "Crested Eagle" ending her days at Dunkirk. Directly opposite Greenwich pier is the Isle of Dogs, once the site of the Royal Kennels, but now a busy industrial area. During the war this part of the river, the "great U", was a favourite point of recognition for the Luftwaffe pilots, but despite the superiority which they held in the early years of the conflict, the Port was never closed for more than a few hours. As we chug upstream we can see that many of the warehouses are still mere empty shells, and that scars such as those of the Surrey Commercial Docks will not disappear for a long time.

At the top of Limehouse Reach is Dunbar Wharf, from which the convict ships sailed to Botany Bay in the last century. Rounding the bend in the river the *Grapes*, Shadwell Gardens and the *Prospect* provide a welcome break from the line of factories and warehouses, and if we are very lucky we may see rising from London Docks the masts of one of the few windjammers still afloat, such as the "Pamir", or the "Viking".

Tower Bridge, for most sailors, symbolises a safe return, but for us it is probably the Tower itself, appearing suddenly as if out of a history book, that is of the greatest interest. This superb monument, mostly dating from Norman and medieval



times, rises impressively from the river side. Tower Wharf in front is a pleasant garden where on fine days Londoners sit and watch the ships sail by; at one time though the prospect was by no means so inviting, for Traitor's Gate opened then direct on to the river to admit many a tragic procession. A little further on we pass Billingsgate Fish Market with its golden fish weather-vanes. If we went there early enough in the morning we could wander around its stone halls, see many amazing creatures of the deep and admire the balancing feats of the porters. Billingsgate, used since the ninth century as a landing-place for fishing boats, claims to be the only market in which every kind of fish—"wet, dried and shell"—is sold. Looking back on the muddy wash which our boat makes it is hard to believe that this same water once gave up a rich harvest; up till 1914 flounders were caught at Brentford, and in 1920 my sister caught a trout with a toy fishing-net off Chiswick Eyot, where now it is difficult to find even a stickleback. After shooting Southwark Bridge we catch a momentary but unforgettable glimpse of St. Paul's rising behind the old port of Queenhythe.



It was at the next bend that we had our first look at the river from Waterloo Bridge but it is well worth while to continue further. From Westminster the panorama changes with every reach but retains till its farthest limits, though in diminishing degree, all the manifestations of a port. On then past Lambeth Palace on the South and the Tate Gallery on the North bank; past the impressive mass of Battersea Power Station, old Battersea Church, and the Georgian terrace of Cheyne Walk at Chelsea, from where Turner painted his "Fighting Téméraire."

The next reaches go to the other extreme—the smuts and smells of Lot's Road gasworks, numerous factories, and Wandsworth Power Station being relieved only by Hurlingham Park. But once past the *Star and Garter* at Putney, sport and pleasure begin to vie with the materialistic. Here the river is dotted with eights and fours, pairs and skiffs; rowing coaches bicycle along the tow-path bellowing through their megaphones at their charges, and when the tide is full, sailing dinghies from Ranelagh excite onlookers ashore with their antics. At Hammersmith, though, the charm of the river-front mellows the Port still more: the rowing clubs with their pontoons, the conglomeration of small craft around the boat yards, and the friendly little sailing club, blitzed but unbeaten. Hammersmith derived its name from the smithies situated near the "cut" a little further along, to which barges till quite recently came for goods. But since those days the "cut" has been filled in and flying bombs have fallen to their inexorable conclusion.

However, on this bend of the river is *The Doves*, and this has survived the wrath of three centuries. Lacking nothing in historic interest when compared with the *Prospect*, this delightful house, known to thousands only as a landmark in the University Boat Race, has a particular charm of its own. In the summer customers take their beer into the garden—in which James Thomson wrote *The Seasons*—where they can sit and watch the sailing boats dodge to and fro. A little further on

is Chiswick Mall with its pleasant houses and river-side gardens; at spring tides the Mall is often under water and swans, driven off their island sanctuary, the Eyot, explore its whole length squawking inquisitively at their new surroundings. Though river traffic here is of diminutive proportions compared with that of the lower Port, the tireless tugs, each with their string of lighters, dispel any ideas that by now the Thames is merely an idle stream. It is not until we have passed Mortlake with its brewery, and Strand-on-the-Green (still giving the impression of a river-side village), that the willow tree succeeds the hard-working crane and the Thames throws off its mantle of commerce.

We now enter Syon Reach and it is difficult to think that Piccadilly Circus is only nine miles away, and that we are not in Arcady. On the left are Kew Gardens and the Old Deer Park, while on the right Syon House (seat of the Dukes of Northumberland), designed by Adam about 1760 and surmounted by the Northumberland lion, stares squarely at us between dignified cedar and poplar trees. No sooner have we lost sight of the cows browsing in the water meadows, and the herons standing pensively in the shallows, than we come to Isleworth and the *London Apprentice*. This magnificent Queen Anne building, the Georgian houses, and the Old Church, blend together to give Isleworth, like Strand-on-the-Green, the appearance of a typical English village. In these quieter reaches the towing-path is always a popular walk at weekends, many walking its whole length from Putney to Richmond, here the river-front becomes a charming mixture of Victorian and Edwardian houses rising in terraces up the hill. In summer the boathouses do a roaring trade and youth shows its paces while the more aged sleep contentedly on the green lawns. Four miles further on the river narrows sharply and we come to Teddington, the tidal limit of the Thames.

With the pleasure steamers entering the lock to start their long voyage up to Oxford, we see the Port in the last of its many

moods. When we hear its name being spoken, or see its muddy stream, we may experience conflicting emotions; an appreciation of its beauty, or distaste for its squalor, interest in its historic role or admiration for its commercial greatness. But whatever each one of us feels, we will probably all agree that the Port of London is very much alive. It is indomitable, its strength, like that of anything which has survived the centuries, seems unailing.



*Part Two*

LIVING IN LONDON





*Lionel Hale*

INCLUDING MAYFAIR

*Drawings by Ronald Searle*

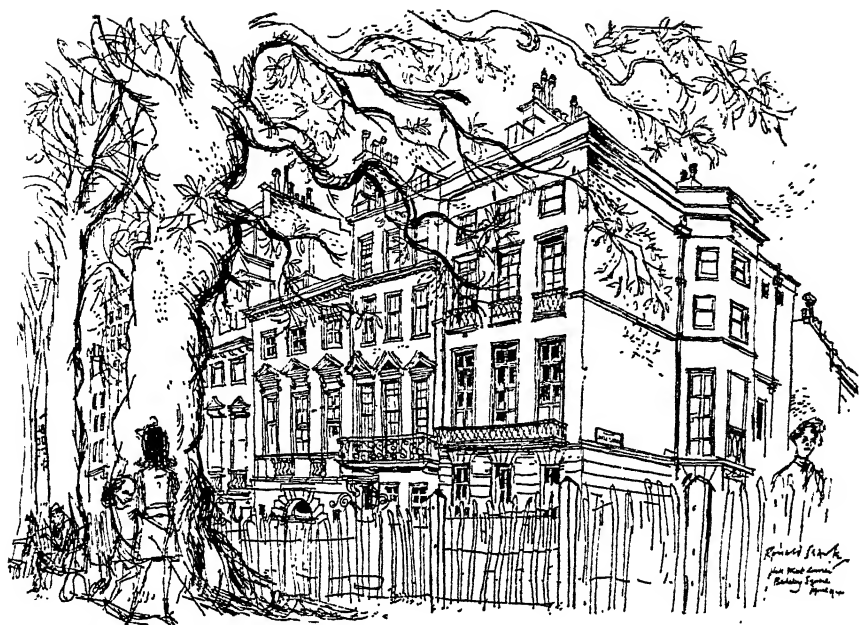
I write of the richest part of London; and what could, on the whole, be more agreeable than that? A friend of mine, during the late war, was sent as a R.A.F. officer to Canada, and spent a week's leave in New York. Visiting a club which arranged for hospitality for Allied officers, he was asked what family he would choose to stay with. What, they asked, were his tastes? Other officers, it appeared, chose for their hosts families that were interested in the ballet, the théâtre, the art galleries, and music. Not so my young friend. "I should like", he said firmly, "to stay with the richest family in New York." He had the time of his life, and never went to the opera once.

I write, then, of the richest part of London. If you walk up Park Lane from Hyde Park Corner to Marble Arch, turn east to Oxford Circus, turn south and arrive at Piccadilly Circus by walking like a bowl with a left-hand bias down Regent Street, and then return to Hyde Park Corner along Piccadilly, you will have beaten the bounds of this parish: which (you will observe) includes Mayfair. It is not a strict and regular parallelogram, for nothing in London is strict or regular; but I call it one for the sake of fond alliteration. It is the parallelogram of the purse.

My parish—this extended Mayfair—has always been rich, though wealth has a habit of changing hands. The time is past when (a couple of wars ago) Baedeker could write, in his charmingly solid prose: "The English aristocracy, many of the members of which are enormously wealthy, resides in the country during the greater part of the year; but it is usual for the principal families to have a mansion in London, which they occupy at any rate during the season." There being hardly any wealthy aristocracy left, there is hardly a season any more. Their "handsome edifices" (dear Baedeker!) are pulled down; their Titians and Del Sartos and Hobbemas and Turners and Guido Renis are scattered; their chandeliers, perhaps, adorn the foyers of cinemas; new hotels have risen on their sites, many-roomed, multilingual. Money still talks in the parallelogram; but it now talks in an enchanting variety of accents.

I suppose one might grieve for the passing of old glories; but their aroma still lingers and still blesses Mayfair. Where the great houses—Lansdowne and Devonshire and Chesterfield and the rest—once stood, some sort of dignity has descended on hotels and shops and offices; and even in the motor showrooms a 1949 Rolls Royce maintains the tradition of taste and affluence.

It must have been an excellent thing to have known Devonshire House when Georgiana Spencer reigned there, fifth Duchess of Devonshire, and Tom Moore could write of it as "that rendezvous of all the wits and beauties of fashionable life,



where Politics was taught to wear its most attractive form and sat enthroned, like virtue, among the Epicureans, with all the Graces and Pleasures for handmaids." But now Everyman has the entrée to it for the price of a luncheon. I do not wish to be thought a Leveller, but Devonshire House may possibly be of more use to me now than it would have been when I could merely gape at its façade, and admire the footmen and flambeaux at its doors. But then, again, how sad it is that, without it, no one may see Politics "wearing its most attractive form" and Mr. Ernest Bevin or Mr. Herbert Morrison "sitting enthroned, like virtue"! Oh, on this matter, I am torn, I am undecided!

We need not be undecided about the architectural changes in the streets and squares of Mayfair. They are uniformly utilitarian, which is their only excuse, and not a very good one. The little houses of the eighteenth century that remain in the stone canyons seem to have been left to teach a lesson in manners.



Berkeley Square, with its blocks of offices, wears, someone said, "all the simple beauty of the forecourt of Sing-Sing". Business houses, blocks of flats, and a cinema (which shows excellent European films) have invaded Curzon Street, where Becky Sharp once entertained the Marquis of Steyne.

The Rawdon Crawleys found Curzon Street expensive: the whole of my parallelogram is so still, if we except the very un-Mayfair-like stores and small shops of Oxford Street. In my parish there is "nothing for nothing, and precious little for sixpence". It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a poor man to enter this kingdom. I do not say that the value is not good—far from it. A Dürer in a little street off Bond Street, a champagne cocktail at the Ritz, a suit in Savile Row, a pendant, a leather dressing-case, a pair of binoculars will cost no more than the proper price for luxuries. But, in general, this part of London caters only for the luxuries, such as the luxuries of today may be.

The older traditions, in a circumscribed age, are possibly hard to keep up. We are not likely to see again an aged peer walk into his tailor's in Savile Row, in agitation at the news that the cutter was in failing health, and order eighty pairs of trousers—to be in time. As progress marches on, Europe will run short of kings and princes and archdukes to stay on their travels or in their exile, as they have stayed for a hundred and fifty years, with carefully arranged private entrances and staircases for them. Mr. James Bone, who knows London as only a Scot can know it, records a glorious observation of Mr. Claridge in 1846, when it was rumoured that the Pope was to seek refuge in England. "I am so full up with Kings and royal dukes that I doubt if I can find proper accommodation for him. But", added Mr. Claridge, brightening up, "as His Holiness is a bachelor, he might not need so many rooms."

I think, perhaps, we had better not sigh for the days when Clive lived (and died) at No. 45 Berkeley Square, or Disraeli

bought No. 19 Curzon Street out of his *Endymion* royalties, or the Duke of Hamilton married Miss Gunning (with a ring off the bed-curtain) in the secret chapel in Curzon Street run by the infamous marriage-broker, Dr. Alexander Keith. (He solemnised, or rather frivolised, 7,000 marriages there before the indignant hand of the Law fell on him.) Those days are gone, and perhaps they were not very glorious, after all. During the bombardment of London, I watched St. James's Church in Piccadilly burn, yet another Wren church, and thought affectionately of the colloquy in Vanbrugh's *The Relapse*:

*Berinthia*: "Pray what church does your lordship most oblige with his presence?"

*Lord Foppington*: "Oh, St. James's, madam; there's much the best company."

*Berinthia*: "Is there good preaching too?"

*Lord F.*: "Why, faith, madam, I can't tell. A man must have little to do there that can give an account of the sermon."

Times change. Grosvenor Square, once the mansions of the aristocracy of the old world, is now the province of the new. It had long held the American Embassy; during the war, it had been locally re-christened "Eisenhower Platz", and it was a friendly jibe that our one territorial ambition was to get it back. (Taxi-drivers, south-bound along South Audley Street, used to cut nimbly through to Park Lane to avoid jeeps racing, with an extra-territorial gleam in their drivers' eyes, round the square on the right-hand side of the road.) Now that Roosevelt's statue stands there for ever, in its setting of green lawns and plane trees, we have ceded the square in spirit to the U.S.A., and I fancy the transaction does no dishonour to either of us.

Times change, but much remains the same. The tailors of Savile Row are still proud men. There was the great man who (so superb was the Edwardian snip) dined with a Lord and reported next day to a customer that the company was rather mixed.

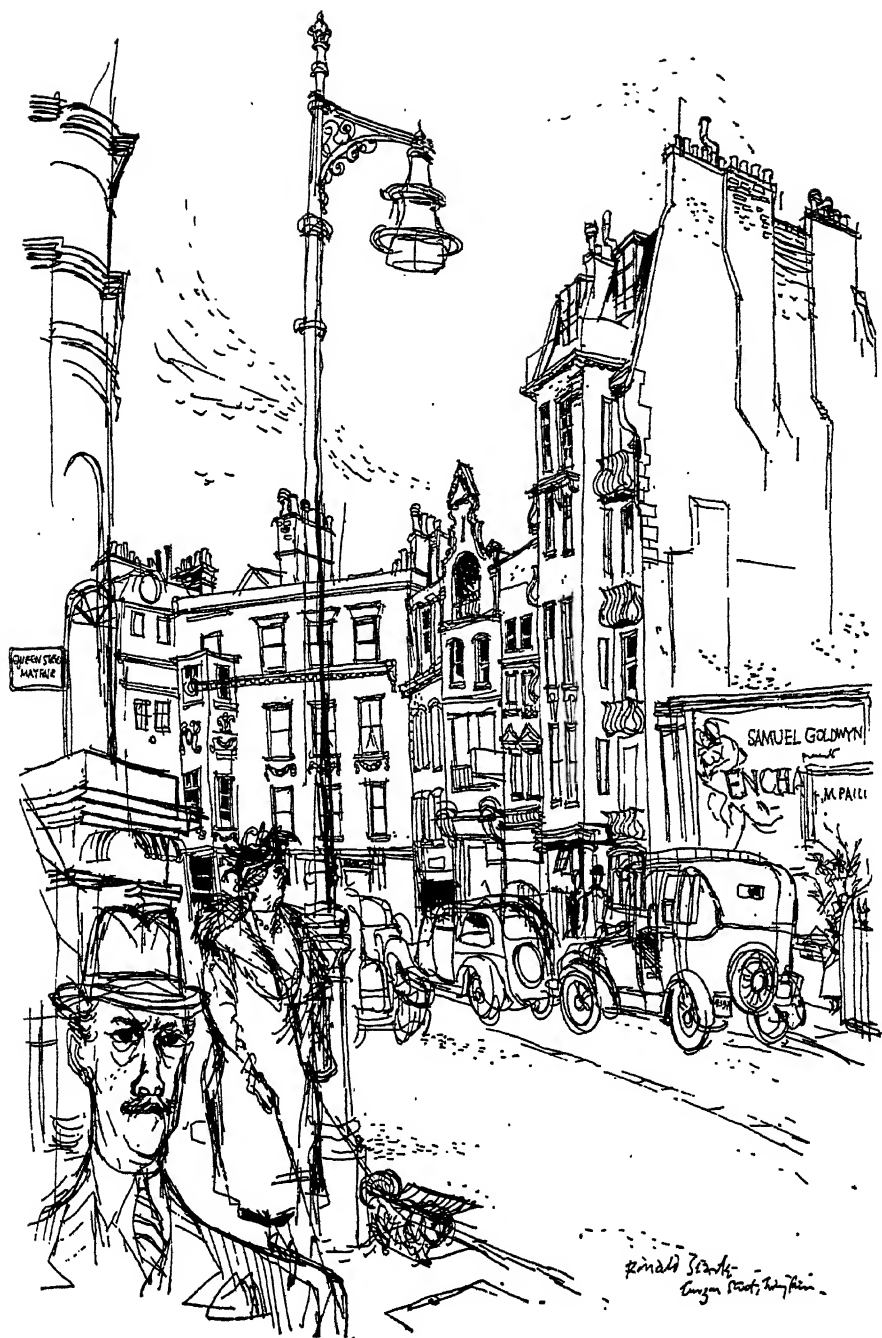
"Damn it all," retorted the customer, "you don't expect them all to be tailors!" They are tyrants, those men, to this day.

Times change, but not such quiet backwaters as Albany (full title, "Albany Chambers", but not, please, "*The Albany*"). To be sure, these are no longer bachelor chambers for gentlemen, as they were when Lord Byron lived there, and Macaulay for "fifteen happy years", and Canning, and Ernest Worthing. (How fact and fiction kiss and commingle in one's mind!) but the quiet avenue is unchanged, tucked away behind and to the north of Piccadilly.

Albany remains, in G. O. Trevelyan's words, "that luxurious cloister whose inviolable tranquillity affords so agreeable a relief from the roar and flood of Piccadilly", even if the once-bachelor cloister has now become a domestic hearth. It has as much unchangeability about it as, say, has the yearly crop of nudes, rural scenes, presentation portraits of Lord Mayors, Royal oils, and animal paintings at the Royal Academy further along Piccadilly to the west. But at this I must not appear to sneer. The yearly exhibition at Burlington House is soothing to an eye bedevilled by Chagall, watering from Picasso: it has, like Albany, an "inviolable tranquillity".

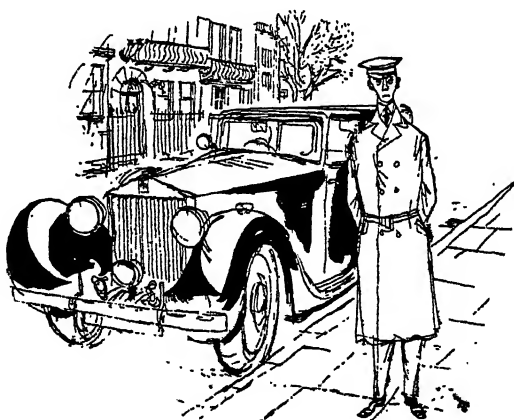
Of all the charms of my parallelogram, I think I most admire its blend of liveliness and quietude. It is rather like a merry little dance danced on a thick pile carpet. You have all the art galleries, the Berkeley and the Lefevre and Agnew's and the rest; and you can have the happiest times in the great auction rooms, Sotheby's and Christie's, either bidding yourself or taking a vicarious interest in watching the moguls bidding for Gainsboroughs. If you are a man, you can have your hair cut as hair should be cut—slowly, ritualistically.

Here, and here only (I think) in the world, can a grocer's take on grandeur. There are plums in brandy at Fortnum and Mason, and things in aspic at Jackson's, and the civility of the ages at both. You will find, side by side, in streets like Albemarle



and Dover and South Audley the treasures of Samarkand and the homespun of the Shetlands. I doubt if window-gazing has such charms elsewhere, such a profusion of the rare, such a variety of the strange; such a sheen of china, such a burnish of silver; such a caress of leather. I speak not of the multiple meanness of Oxford Street, our northern boundary (though even Oxford Street has the great bookseller, Bumpus, and some excellent saddlery), but of the thousand-and-one shops in the streets which lie to right and left of Bond Street about as far as a man could throw a fair-sized ruby.

Here, at any rate, is where (if I were very rich) I should think it my duty to live. A house in, perhaps, Hill Street, within a few yards of the Park; the restaurants, the *Mirabelle* or *La Maison Basque*, or the *Caprice*; the hotels, the *Ritz*, or *Mayfair* or *Claridge's* (where one may see Sir Osbert Sitwell dining alone, dressed, with a book) or *Brown's*, where my aunt from the North should stay; my club in Brook Street or (across the way from my parish) in St. James's: my gew-gaws and *galanterie* and cheeses and socks all within an acre of ground. . . . As Iago said to Roderigo, "Put money in thy purse." Here is the parallelogram for it.





*Elizabeth Bowen*

REGENT'S PARK AND ST. JOHN'S WOOD

*Drawings by Keith Vaughan*

Regent's Park is something more than an enclosed space; it has the character of a terrain on its own—almost, one might feel, a peculiar climate. The impression, on entering by any one of the gates for the first time, is of dreamlike improbability and a certain rawness; as though one were looking upon a masterly but abandoned sketch. The first thought is, "Can I be, still, in London?"—for, in this enclave as nowhere else in London, British unostentatiousness drops away, to be succeeded by something stagey, bragging, foreign; none the less drenched in and tempered by northern light. "The Park", be it understood, comprehends the Nash architecture with the scenic layout: the two form, as they were intended to do, a whole. At no point, however bosky, in the

interior is one to forget the Regency terraces, upon three sides overtopping the trees.

Regent's Park backs upon, and has as its southern base, Marylebone Road (formerly the New Road) and stretches northward towards the heights of Hampstead and Highgate. That the beauty of those—as they then were—green hills might not be lost to view, the top of the Park was at first left open: along this top runs the cutting of the Regent's Canal. That, later, Albert Road should come into being—on the far side of and open on the canal—was, one must suppose, inevitable: the ideality of south-facing building sites, looking down over gladed acres, was not to be ignored. The Albert Road Victorian houses were to be short-lived: almost all have, now, given place to high blocks of twentieth-century flats. Thus, if one were to tip the present-day Park map into the vertical, one would see it as a flat-bottomed Regency cup, filled to the brim with green, with a modern lid.

Regent's Park in its north-east corner harbours the Zoo: when the wind blows one way, roaring of lions or shrieks of monkeys are wafted down. Seen at sunset across the Park playing-fields, the Mappin Terraces take on the queerness of Dali rocks. Albany Street and Park Road, both now considerable thoroughfares, run, respectively, up the Park's east and west flanks; the air here inside, however, just as it breeds mist, seems to have the property of consuming sound—over lawns, walks, flower-beds, groves, mounds and artificial water there hangs what is in the main silence. On summer evenings, silence inside the Inner Circle (now Queen Mary's Garden) is pleasantly torn across by amplified scraps of Shakespeare from the Open Air Theatre.

In 1811, a year felicitous in view of the projects of the Prince Regent and John Nash, the lease of land then known as Marylebone Park—which was, in fact, a rough space of fields and market-gardens along the still raw New Road—reverted to the



Crown. Mr. John Summerson, in whose *John Nash* and *The Building of Georgian London* the history of our area is set out, and by whose research I profit, traces the growth of politer London northwards throughout the eighteenth century. But, he remarks, Fashion had brought itself to a halt at the New Road—thus far, no farther! Socially, therefore, Regent's Park was the most daring feature of the "Metropolitan Improvements" town-planning project, rational if spectacular, that the Prince and his architect undertook. The new Regent Street, cut through from south to north, was to terminate in something newer still: "a private garden city for the aristocracy". Of the great gated enclosure to be called Regent's Park, the terraces, with their theatrical palace-like painted façades facing in on the green, were to be, as it were, palisades—and, about the terraces' dun brick backs, turned upon all the rest of London, there is still something daunting and palisade-like. Inside the Park—and, indeed, its proclaimed attraction—there were, by



the original Nash plan, to have been twenty-six villas (in the Italian sense), each artfully set in the landscape of grass, water and trees.

Unhappily, Nash's imagination overshot that of the patrons for whom he bid. Though by 1816 the roads, fences and plantations had been completed, and the bed of ornamental water dug, Nash had already received a set-back. Of this he wrote: *The numerous applications I had from men of rank and fortune, when the design was in agitation, to set down their names for Sites for Villas within the Pale of the Park, justified the expectation of that part of the improvement commencing immediately; but before the roads were completed and the park inclosed, the disposition to building suddenly became paralysed.* There had, furthermore, been advanced an opinion that too many villas would spoil the scenery—as Nash saw the villas as scenery, this was the more annoying. Of the twenty-six envisaged, eight only were built (four, and a lodge of the fifth, today survive). Nash, however, did not lose confidence: *As the Park increases in beauty, it will increase in value . . . the first occupiers will stamp the character of the neighbourhood.*

Nash's voice is the swan-song of an age in which culture was linked with wealth, taste with breeding. He conceived Regent's Park for a *beau monde* which was in fact already on the decline—which possibly had never existed, really—and Regent's Park was finished just in time to be an anachronism. Between 1821 and 1826 almost all the terraces were built or building; and, if there had been shyness as to the projected villas, the terrace houses filled up as soon as their roofs were on.

The Park ground-plan is true to the design—the Outer Circle contains the Inner Circle; which is to say, one road describes the circumference of the verdant Park; another, in the Park's centre, loops round an inner garden—today, Queen Mary's. The Outer and Inner Circles are connected by a subsidiary road emerging opposite York Gate. At this point

starts the lake; which, at first no broader than a canal, bends at the Park's south-west corner, widens out opposite the west-side terraces into a sheet of water with wooded islands, then, to the north, splits widely into two prongs. Here, the whole disposition of water and trees round it could not be more lovely: there is an infinitely romantic mystery about the distances—I believe London holds no landscape to challenge this . . . On the east side, the layout, though pleasing, is more conventional. As the Park sweeps north, design expires completely: somewhat unmeaning stretches of grass, with goal-posts, vanish towards the Zoo . . . There are four gateways—Hanover, Clarence, York and Gloucester—though the Park can be entered at other points.

Regent's Park was thrown open to the public in 1838; today, it contains attractions Nash did not foresee—a boathouse, a children's paddling pool, a tea garden; and, inside the Inner Circle, the famous rose-beds and the aforesaid Open Air Theatre. With spring, blue-green deck chairs come out under the yellow-green, flickering trees. In spring tulips, in autumn dahlias form a brilliant ribbon along one reach of the lake.

At present, after years of damage and vacancy, the terraces (some still undergoing repair) are in all-day occupation by Civil Servants: in the early dusk of winter, before the Ministries go home, entire façades are lit up—row upon row, the windows between the pillars shed blazing gold. One might take it that the *élite* had returned to earth and were embracing the whole Park in one enormous party. Ironically, these houses, built for festive illusion, never can have achieved it so completely as at this closing hour of an official day.

All the same, they have known festivity, good wine, reflection, talk. In the main, Regent's Park has attracted, as residents, solidifying Bohemians. Actors, painters, singers, sport and theatrical promoters, editors, critics, poets in these large-roomed, large-windowed terraces lived their more mellow

years. Professional people, barristers, doctors, in whose careers temperament as well as intellect played a part, sought these houses out; aristocrats deviating towards imagination joined them. To such, Nash's vision spoke; virtuosity summoned the virtuoso. The naïvety, the swaggering, lyrical imperfection of Regent's Park may correspond with something in the creative nature. One must have worked, perhaps, one must both have succeeded and failed, before one can enjoy Nash. Sweet, specious, spacious, the scene he set has the character not of an inheritance, rather of an award.



St. John's Wood is uphill neighbour to Regent's Park—its south-east corner (which is Lord's Cricket Ground) and the Park's north-west just do not touch: St. John's church, a landmark, stands between them. One enters St. John's Wood between the tantalisingly high wall of the cricket ground and the railings of the church's long, pleasant graveyard—here, only trees weep now, melancholy hangs lightly over the antique

headstones: Joanna Southcott, of the famous Box, and John Sell Cotman lie among others here.

Region of hills and declivities, ridgy skylines, quietly rising and falling roads, St. John's Wood starts with romance from this conformation, and has the further charm of the earliest villa-architecture, of one kind, known in London. This is the Eyre Estate: yet another experiment, Mr. Summerson shows, in planning—here, on a doll's-house scale. An existing map for the project, dated 1794, features one, at that time, absolute innovation: semi-detached villas. In favour of these, a pioneer



break was made with the ruling London tradition of terrace-houses. That is not to say that St. John's Wood is without terraces—some, e.g. St. John's Wood Terrace itself, are of stucco, nice in ironwork detail and mouldings of the very narrow front doors. But the predominating impression is of villas, in whose styles the late classic and early romantic alternate. These seem to have come straight from Ackermann's

pages: their time colour is early nineteenth century. Laburnum, lilac, acacia appear indigenous.

The spine of the region is Wellington (which becomes Finchley) Road; the approximate boundaries are as follows—on the north, Boundary Road; on the south, St. John's Wood Road; on the east, Avenue Road; on the west, Maida Vale. Characteristic of St. John's Wood, however, is a very quiet network between the thoroughfares. Altogether, the concept would seem romantic privacy—just as Regent's Park expresses august showiness. Here is the extreme of the individual, as opposed to the extreme of the social, idea—though fancy is tempered by sense, taste, order and wit. Retirement, with tenderness as its base, is suggested at each of the many turns; most of all by those high garden walls with doors in them. Creeper-draped verandas, gardens in which birds sing, add enchantment—so much so that, at the time of my girlhood, the idea of the entire St. John's Wood being an abode of love had not yet evaporated; it was only respectable to live there, I was told, if one were an R.A. . . . St. John's Wood's name drifts across the pages of many novels; alas, here as elsewhere daylight grows greyer now. Actually, those few secluded ladies were neighboured by a strapping proportion of highly-respected families of successful artists: this was, and is, an ideal place to bring up children, think, paint, write, sing, enjoy *villagiatura* inside London. Studios ran into the gardens. In *Tempestuous Petticoat*, story of her own childhood, Miss Clare Leighton pictures it all for us. Landseer, George Eliot, Bradlaugh, Thomas Huxley and Herbert Spencer also lived in St. John's Wood. Stephen Spender lives there now.

Into no part of London can blocks of flats have intruded more inappropriately, with less grace. Monster-high, and giving an impression of sheer dull bulk, to the extent of seeming of beef-red brick right through, these blocks in St. John's Wood statically trample upon the neighbourhood. There are not yet



many, but there are more than enough: we are given to understand there will be more. Below and between them, the fragile be-villaed landscape exists with a nonchalance which one has to honour: this out-faced war; can it survive stupidity? Ominously, lines of bomb-damaged villas are being left to rot, trees of their gardens growing in at their windows; someone is waiting, greedy, for their ideal sites. Over these little cadavers it is impossible not to shed a tear—they were so smiling, gay, neat, compact, warm; so much what so many people want, above all, today.





*E. Arnot Robertson*

## HAMPSTEAD: 'FIELD OF THE MOST HAY'

*Drawings by Barbara Jones*

'Hampstead", said the intense young man with the long, lank, flaxen hair, "isn't so much a locality as an attitude of mind."

"How right you are!" said his girl-friend, with long, dark, somewhat greasy hair. "How absolutely right! Isn't Miles *right*?" she demanded of the third of the party, as they waited for a train at Hampstead Underground station, where I had often seen them before. (Something to do with films, I suspected: we have many such in the neighbourhood. They were all highly documentary types.)

The other young man had a curly brown beard. "Hampstead is hell," he said morosely. "Dead from the neck up. And down."

"But what Miles said is, that it's more a mental state than a place," she persisted. Whereas Miles was intense about every-



thing, she appeared to be intense mainly about Miles. "And I feel that's so awfully true, don't you?"

"Of course," said the bearded one, as though this were something everyone knew, but would scarcely bother to mention. "It's what I've just said. That is hell. In all but the medieval conception."

What Hampstead as an attitude of mind may be, I have no idea, but I do know that the three are typical of one aspect of Hampstead as a locality. We have the largest number of harmless human oddities of any part of London. The Heath is our best-known feature, our old houses the most beautiful feature, but to me, anyway, as a resident of fifteen years' standing, our remarkable supply of eccentrics is our most interesting feature.

The only place I know which equals Hampstead in producing such a proportion of them per head of the population is Kenya. In Kenya it is always said to be the height which sends so many people slightly and inoffensively loopy: I cannot think it is the altitude which does it in Hampstead—even if we are the highest part of London—for that is only three hundred feet above sea level. Not enough, surely, to account for the endearing little man, dressed in pseudo-naval uniform, who goes about saluting lamp-posts, and frequently leads forlorn hopes up Haverstock Hill. ("Come on, boys! Another rush and we've got 'em!") One of the happiest people alive, I imagine, for judging by his subsequent shouts, the forlorn hopes invariably come off.) Or for the less happy, conspiratorial type who mutters to himself, "Ha, they haven't reckoned with me!" One glance at his unimpressive face and figure suggests that, indeed, no one ever has.

Then there is the distinguished-looking man, of military carriage, with small pieces of torn paper, scraps of fur and bits of gas-mask pinned all over his expensively cut suit, in a Dali-ish manner; probably a hanger-on of the extreme group

among our artists. I believe we also have, nowadays, more artists than Chelsea: they have come up here to live in great numbers during the past few years, the good, the bad and the indifferent; chiefly the indifferent, I gather, from glancing at their work as I go by, while they sit on camp-stools, sketching Admiral's House, Judge's Walk and the Georgian parts of Heath Street, where I live. But it may be that as a local resident I am, as the bearded man said, just dead from the neck up. And down.

My small boy, who has a carrying voice, is an embarrassment, more I fancy to me than to the artists. "Do look! The last time that lady painted this bit of road she made our front door red. Well, I told her it was black, but now she's done it all sort of silvery dabs." "Shh, darling, maybe those are high-lights—you know, shine on the paint." "But our paint doesn't have any shine, it's too old and dirty." "Yes, but perhaps she sees it like that, as if it was new." "Oh! D'you think she does? Then I won't say anything."

We have, however, our proud memories of creative artists of rather more widely accepted vision: Constable and Romney lived here, and on Hampstead ponds Shelley sailed boats to amuse the children of Leigh Hunt. Dickens stalked about the Heath, though we never claim him as a resident—he only took furnished houses hereabouts, one after the other. And Mrs. Siddons, buying a piece of printed cotton in the High Street, said "Yes, but will it wash?" in tones of such tragic concern that the shopman, not knowing who she was, is reported to have been overwhelmed with surprise. Nowadays, of course, he would have been more hardened to strange intensities of voice and manner.

Our writers—we abound in contemporary novelists and publishers, too, one of whom can often be seen stalking the other across the Heath—go to look reverently at Keats's House, down towards the Vale of Health. This last is, on the whole, a

very ugly lot of little houses, mainly mid-Victorian successors to those built illegally, one imagines, a couple of hundred years before; they stand alone in a pocket of the Heath, though the Heath has always been common ground, and there have always been restrictions on putting up any but temporary dwellings for shepherds and the like—or at least for as long as there have been laws of that kind anywhere in the country. But its isolation had its advantages; the name commemorates the fact that no one died there of the Plague, when it swept over London.

So many celebrities and near-celebrities of their times lived in Hampstead, when it was a convenient country retreat from London, that there is now a constant reminder of the ephemeral quality of fame in the quantity of plaques beside “period” doors, which bear names meaning absolutely nothing today. Who were Thomas Park, “the Poetical Antiquary”, 1759–1834, and his son John James, who lived in Church Row? Anyway, if they are forgotten now they were lucky then: there could hardly be a more charming place to live than this quiet side-street with tall, eighteenth-century houses on both sides, and a line of trees down the middle. And what did “Joanna Baillie, Poetess” write at Bolton House? I have often wondered about the rules for plaque-mounting. They must for a long time have been pretty easy-going in Hampstead, to have allowed so many to appear; and probably quite a few non-entities have attracted unearned attention to themselves and their property in this way. Is there anything to prevent me from announcing on the walls of my house, if I have a fancy for it, that “Here Arnot Robertson Cooked and Washed Up, Almost Incessantly, from 1934 to——” leaving a space for the date of my death? But perhaps one cannot get an allocation of enamelled iron for such a purpose in these days. The Du Mauriers, who lived at Grove House, did not sport one: it can’t have been shortages in their time. I think the plaque



fashion must have stopped rather abruptly at some unspecified time in the nineteenth century.

At intervals throughout the year, Hampstead is subjected to sudden and heavy invasions of people from other parts of London: they come when the snow lies, and at Easter, Whitsun and the August Bank Holidays, while the fairs are on the Heath. The attitude of the residents to the seasonal visitors has all the latent hostility shown by permanent seaside-dwellers towards the summer hordes who usurp their beaches: "My dear, we never go near the Heath for days afterwards . . . one daren't sit on the grass for fear of remains of fish-and-chips adhering . . . if not worse."

Hard-weather migrants are less resented: ski-ers and toboganists leave no traces when the thaw sends them away again, and as soon as there is a real covering of snow, the steep slopes on either side of Spaniards Road become a miniature St. Moritz, down which Hampsteadians themselves have been known to slide, with cries of "Gare!" or "Achtung!" to show that the form has been reputably learnt elsewhere. "Achtung", however, has fallen more and more out of favour of late; its Swissness can so easily be overlooked in Hampstead.

The fairs, judging by early nineteenth-century prints, have not altered the type of one piece of their machinery for a hundred years or so: they use the same sort of swing-boats, roundabouts, coconut shies and sideshows. It is only the spirit of the people who attend them which has changed. Radio, the cinema and professional games have made us into a nation of onlookers, or passive listeners. Old pictures of fair-days always show crowds going round on the painted horses and flying chairs, with a relatively few people looking on. Now, in reality, it is always the other way about: ten observers at least are there for every person actively amusing himself. It cannot be the prices of taking part in the fair that are responsible for this, because the most surprising junk can be sold for almost

any sum at the stalls. It is just that we have learnt to take our pleasures by proxy: the Pearly Kings and their ostrich-plumed Donahs still appear, dressed up to please, but they look exceedingly self-conscious about it.

Then after three days of continuous steam-music, the fair ends, the swing-boats are packed up, the huge lorries pull out, everyone connected with this curious survival of Merrie England goes away, and the Heath becomes again a place of bird-call in the evenings, a stretch of rough park and woodland wholly surrounded by London, where ordinary people can see moorhens and squirrels, and fanciful people are always reporting that they have spied on foxes. About the latter I remain sceptical: like many other people in the neighbourhood, I keep chickens and ducks near the Heath, and none of us has lost one of them to a fox yet.



It is odd that I should be so fond of Hampstead, its twisted streets on different levels, reached by unexpected flights of steps—I cannot imagine living anywhere else for choice—because on my first visit, as a child, the place was a great disappointment. We lived in the country, and only went up to London once a year, for an orgy of shopping and two pantomimes. My alluring idea of Hampstead came from a hearty

young clergyman, who arrived on a visit to our neighbours. He had the kind of nervous jocularity which makes it impossible to answer questions straightforwardly, combined with the first extreme Oxford accent I had ever met. Asked where he worked in London, he replied, "Hampstead is where I, ah, labah, in the field of the Most Hay."

"The field of the Most Hay" seized hold of my imagination. What a lovely place to work in! (I managed to understand "labah" all right.) So rich, so rewarding. I asked my people if we could go to Hampstead during one of our visits, but the pantomime season saw to it that our orgy took place in the winter, or at latest in early spring. They asked why; I told them I wanted to see how much grass there was. They said I was being sillier than usual: grass was something we had in plenty all the year round at home. One didn't come up to London to look at grass. It was years later that I jumped at the chance of visiting a school friend in St. John's Wood at the beginning of the summer holidays, and walked over to the Heath.

No fields at all! Even at the right season, hardly any hay!

I should have been still more saddened had I known, in advance, that eventually I would marry a Hampstead man—purely by chance, for I met him in Essex—and come to live here permanently.

But as I have tried to convey, there are compensations.





*Nicolas Bentley*

## SOUTH KENSINGTON

*Drawings by the Author*

Let me assume that the region known as South Kensington is no more to you than a name, and that you are standing upon the roof of Kensington Palace in the year 1849. Victoria has been Queen for twelve years. Already in his studious far-seeing mind her Consort is revolving schemes for the great exhibition which, years hence, will arise not far from the Palace beside the waters of the Serpentine.

Half a mile away, as you look southward, you will see Gloucester Lodge, formerly home of the Queen's aunt, Princess Sophia, and later the birthplace of George Canning. Upon the site of the Lodge now stands, for better or worse, the grey brick front of Gloucester Road Station.

Close to where the Lodge stood Bailey's Hotel now rears up its red face, as if blushing to think how poor a show it would have made beside the simplicity of its Georgian predecessor. For here in 1849 stood Hyam's pleasure gardens. Mr. Hyam, a native of Germany, kept a once popular tavern, but I regret



to say, "by his subsequent conduct, became bankrupt, and his premises were closed". Those who now live in this neighbourhood have, however, a charming reminder of Mr. Hyam. With him from Germany this gentleman brought some wild cherry trees to plant in his gardens. Today beneath my window, not a hundred yards from where his tavern stood, I can see as I write the thick white blossom of wild cherry growing in the garden opposite.

Beyond Gloucester Lodge—we are back again on the Palace roof looking once more to the south—your eye will rest on the squat grey tower of Chelsea Church (for there is nothing yet to impede the view) and the huddle of roofs that is Chelsea village. Below and beyond the tower you may catch here and there a glimpse of the Thames gleaming a mile or so away; and in the distance, above the far bank of the river, begin to rise the wooded hills of Surrey.

Suddenly from a field close to the Palace, towards the south-east, comes the crack of a fowling-piece as a covey of partridges rises from the stubble. Later there will arise from this same spot the hideous yellow front of the Natural History Museum, and further north the Albert Hall, that vast echoing rotunda, where every diapason of the human voice, from Tetrizzini's to that of Judge Rutherford (Millions Now Living Will Never Die) are later to be heard. But all this will not happen for thirty years or more, and by that time the foundations and fortunes of South Kensington will have been well and truly laid.

Even had the Albert Memorial never occurred, as some could wish, remembrance of Prince Albert would be assured as long as South Kensington shall exist. For its foundations were built upon the success of the Great Exhibition, of which the Prince Consort was the sole and original begetter.

The financial success of the Exhibition not only exceeded his highest hopes, it beat the wildest expectations of its guaran-

tors. Yet whatever they may have foreseen as a tangible and lasting testimony to its success, the rapid appearance of a huge new suburb is hardly likely to have been included. But by 1852, the year following the Exhibition, its Royal Commissioners had in hand a surplus of more than £170,000. A year later, by some process of financial alchemy which, being myself no economist, I am at a loss to explain, this amount had been doubled. The whole of it was presently put, with some support from the Government, to the purchase of estates lying in a broad area to the south-east of Kensington Palace.

Those of an enquiring or topographical turn of mind may ask for something more precise than the plain postal definition of this region: South-West 7. To the north, the area (it is roughly triangular in shape) is bordered by Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park. From Knightsbridge, along Brompton and Fulham Roads, the triangle runs diagonally southwards. At Thistle Grove, half-way along Fulham Road, the third leg of the triangle hops with irregular strides to the north-west, and so up Palace Gate, back to Kensington Gardens.

Within ten years of the Exhibition the greater part of this area had been given over to wide streets and ample squares, enclosing private gardens. Soon there were churches, schools and shops; but though the neighbourhood remained mostly residential a large part of it was set aside, by the Queen's desire, for development as Prince Albert would unmistakably have wished it to be developed. It became a centre of scientific and cultural training. Great colleges, museums and institutes of learning gradually arose. Today these buildings form one of the most important features of London's widely scattered University.

It was unfortunate at the time, however, that this was a period in English architecture when English architects seemed to know everyone's mind but their own. Some were much struck by Vitruvius, others by Brunelleschi or Pugin; some



swore by Byzantium, others by domestic stained glass and the encaustic tile. So in spite of the opportunity afforded by the Queen's intention, and by the possibilities of the area to be developed, no single scheme was evolved either for the site or the buildings. The result was a triumph for individualism, and, in some cases, an eyesore.

However, it no doubt gratified that sense of formal grandeur which pervaded the notions of the Victorian paterfamilias, a species whose natural habitat was typified by the well-ordered domestic façade of South Kensington.

But though the species died, a victim to the invincible thrust of economic change, its well-built habitat survived. The wide streets, the ample squares, the large houses and the small, have to this day scarcely changed externally.

Yet inside—what a metamorphosis is there! Where lived a family of eight or ten, perhaps more, with their necessary retinue of servants, twice as many now live with less than half the staff. Every mansion that has not been turned into flats seems now to have become either an hotel or a school. It

is scarcely possible to venture forth at any hour between ten o'clock and three in the afternoon without falling athwart some little high-pitched crocodile straggling across the pavement.

This change of scene may be said to epitomise the altered caste of English society as a whole, since those Victorian virtues of stability and discrimination, so badly cracked in 1914, were finally broken and tossed into the dustbin during the Second World War. Whole families (smaller, indeed, than the Victorian pattern, and thank Heaven for it) now live where perhaps in the old days no more than two or three persons were usually gathered together. Where the population of a house or a street once floated at well-defined and carefully preserved social levels, all sorts are now mixed unprotestingly together.

For better or worse, this process of synthesis—or of disintegration, according to the point of view from which you observe it taking place—has been vastly accelerated by the democratic influence of war. The same process has occurred, of course, far beyond the borders of South Kensington. But there it has produced a change—perhaps a permanent one—that has not happened everywhere.

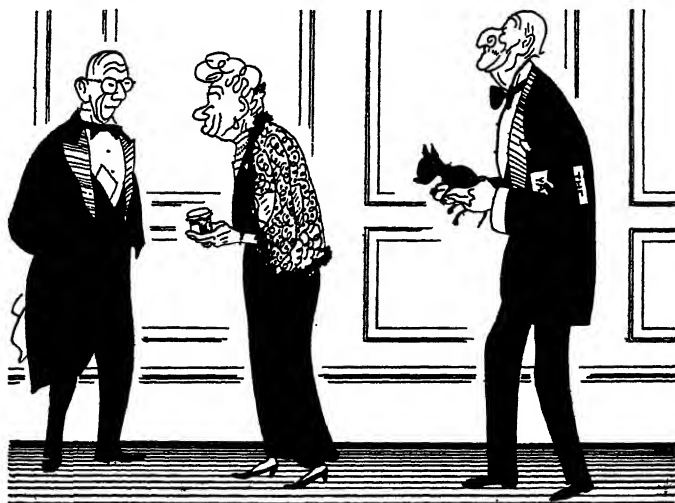
It is no longer true to think of South Kensington as was the habit to think of it not long ago, as a region ineffably English, where afternoon tea, the *Times* crossword, dogs and dinner jackets each prevailed at their appointed hour; where military and civilian vertebrae from the backbone of the British Empire came to retirement in private hotels; where the presence of foreigners was confined to the galleries of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

The change had begun, as a matter of fact, well before the Second World War. Indeed, a sign of it had appeared soon after the First, when the *Institut Français* took up its abode in the neighbourhood, bringing with it a little colony of French families and students. Since then both the *Institut* and the colony have grown to sizeable proportions.

These infiltration tactics have not been confined, however, to the French. The Bulgarian Legation is an accident that might have happened to any part of London. It is a happy accident for South Kensington that the Bulgars should have chosen to set it up there, lending a touch of Balkan mystery and romance to the seclusion of Queen's Gate Gardens.

Within a stone's throw of the Legation (happily few missiles have so far been exchanged) there stands a fine new hostel. It is for coloured students from the British Commonwealth, and has been named, by some inexplicable fantasy, "Balmoral". In Prince's Gardens, hard by, is the Polish University College, for students of a different colour.

Not far from Prince's Gardens lies Elvaston Place, the very model, mirror and protoplast of residential respectability. From time to time, however, a well-bred eyebrow may be raised, a well-bred ear averted, as a company of United States Marines, still mysteriously in occupation of their wartime quarters, discuss the fatigues allotted to them.





To South Kensington has come, too, a share of Europe's displaced persons. Here you may see a Rumanian, there a Czech or Yugoslav. Thus the wheel that started turning in 1851 has come full circle. The babel of tongues that echoed under the glass roof of the Great Exhibition, upon whose fortunes those of South Kensington were built—the babel resounds again in its spacious stuccoed squares and in its grey brick streets. French, Bulgarian, Swahili, Unyora, Masaba, Irangi, Polish, and the delicate intonations of the Bronx mix with the precise accents of the retired colonel's lady from Quetta (via Leamington Spa).

And, like the ladies of so many retired colonels, she from Quetta demands the last word. For in spite of every change that the harshness of nature or the mollifying influences of man (e.g. flying bombs) have wrought upon South Kensington, there remains one triumphant and inviolable symbol of all that South-West 7 stands for: the old lady in the private hotel.

She may be a nuisance (she usually is) she may be a bore, or, if *une malade imaginaire*, the worst of both; she may be a gossip and a snob; she is often, of necessity, a parasite, for she seldom has the training or intelligence that would enable her

to be anything else. Yet she shows at her best certain qualities for which it seems worth while remembering her kindly.

She has learnt, for one thing, the difficult art of growing lonely without complaint. She will not allow the separation and dispersal of her family to weaken her ties of affection for them, as it often weakens theirs for her. Though her lights may be dim, she acts according to them, doing what she believes to be right for no better reason than that she believes it so, making no compromise with expediency. And, since most of her kind have seen what were for them better days, she has never abandoned the fight to keep up appearances; for, not counting thoughts of the past, appearances are all that seem left to an old lady ending her days in the forlorn surroundings of a private hotel.

South Kensington would be a different place without its old ladies. Different, too, without its French, Poles, Bulgars and studious negroes; different without its colleges and museums, its grey brick and yellow stucco, its open squares with their wild cherry blossom in the month of May. And I—for I am, after all, just a lovable old stick-in-the-mud—wish long life to its old ladies and its negroes (separate lives, of course) and to all that makes South Kensington, for me, a delight to live in.





*Leonard Woolf*

BLOOMSBURY

*Drawings by Trekkie Ritchie*

**T**he Londoner, born and bred, is perhaps not the best person to write about London. Its blood is in his blood and its bones in his bones; its atmosphere, including its fogs, is so habitual to him, so much his thoughts and feelings, that he is not himself aware of it. The vastness of this city, its inordinate heterogeneity, add to the difficulty. To the man who lives in Peckham, Peckham is London; to the man who lives in Well Walk, Hampstead is London; to the man who lives in Commercial Road, Whitechapel is London; to the man who lives in Ebury Street, Westminster is London. Yet each of these four districts has a distinct character of its own; each is more different from the others than Manchester from Liverpool or Brighton from Eastbourne. Only the



foreigner is sufficiently ignorant of London to be able to see it as a whole, to synthesise its contradictions.

To the dweller in Bloomsbury, Bloomsbury is London, and in a sense I think he is the only one who is right. I was born in Kensington and have lived in several London districts, including Fleet Street which, undoubtedly, has a peculiar and highly concentrated London flavour and smell. But if I wanted a visitor to get a real taste of this sprawling city, I should take him to Bedford Square, Gower Street and Marchmont Street one autumn evening and say to him: "This is London".

The collocation of Marchmont Street with Bedford Square is important. The essence and glory of Bloomsbury to the outsider are its squares and he is, of course, right. Before the bombs fell upon them—and still more before the speculative builder of flats fell upon them—there was nothing in London, or indeed in any city that I know, like that sequence of squares from Bedford on the west to Mecklenburgh on the east, from Gordon and Tavistock on the north to Bloomsbury on the south. They each had their own character, but they were all of a piece. They were eminently urban, not attempting, like garden cities, to graft the country on to the town, or the town on to the country, but combining form and dignity and bricks and mortar with trees and grass, the busy traffic of a modern town with the peace and quiet appropriate to streets and houses in which men and women are to live their private lives and sleep. Yes, without its squares Bloomsbury would not be Bloomsbury, but it is also true that it would not be Bloomsbury without Marchmont Street and all its other streets of shops and houses. This makes it different from other London districts. Marchmont Street is one of those shopping streets to be found anywhere in London, in the morning full of housewives with string bags drifting from the butcher to the baker and from the baker to the greengrocer or the iron-





monger. The housewives come from the substantial houses in Coram Street or Bernard Street, or from the squares, or from that queer, eminently Victorian Cartwright Gardens, or from Peabody Buildings. Now all these streets, including Marchmont Street, have a shape, an atmosphere, a smell of their own, and it is pure Bloomsbury. When you walk out of Tavistock Square to Cartwright Gardens, you don't feel that you have left one world for another, one district for another, or one class for another, and it is the same when you walk from Cartwright Gardens into Marchmont Street, from Marchmont into Bernard Street, and from Bernard Street once more into a square, the serene and dignified Brunswick Square. You are in the same world all the time, still to a great extent architecturally and humanly homogeneous, a world of quiet streets, squares, and houses in which town-dwellers might live their lives serenely and securely.

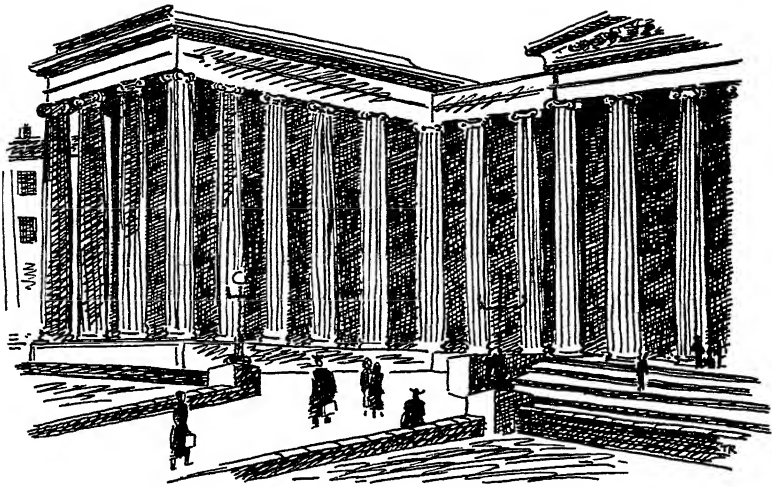
The individuality of Bloomsbury, its unity and homogeneity, its serenity and security, are being rapidly destroyed,

and it may be reduced in another decade or two to the amorphous jumble of mean streets of shops and ugly blocks of flats and offices which are everywhere the same in all the cities of Europe. Some fifteen years before I was born, my mother's father lived, with his large family, in Woburn Lodge just north-east of Tavistock Square. In those days there was a toll-bar across the road which is now Upper Woburn Place, and a square-keeper sat in the wooden box next to the bar to open it and allow vehicles to enter the ducal square. Sixty years later when I went to live in the square, the toll-bar, the box and the keeper had disappeared and omnibuses thundered up and down Upper Woburn Place, but otherwise the square, with its great plane trees, was just the same as it had been in my grandfather's time, or as it had been when Dickens lived in it. Woburn Lodge still stood, a charming house, in its quiet garden next to that fantastic church of St. Pancras which Inwood in 1820 characteristically built, caryatids and all, to imitate the Erechtheum on the Acropolis. I lived fourteen years in Tavistock Square, but long before the German bomb wiped



out the house which I had lived in on the south side, the builder had destroyed the north and east sides and had pulled down Woburn Lodge. The usual characterless, machine-made blocks have taken the place of the pleasant houses. The same thing is happening all over Bloomsbury.

The history of Bloomsbury during the last 200 years is written clearly on the face of its squares, streets, and houses. Its history as part of London really begins only towards the end of the eighteenth century. Its boundaries are Tottenham Court Road on the west, Euston Road on the north, Gray's Inn Road on the east (it is sometimes said that the eastern boundary is Southampton Row, but this is obviously wrong), and Holborn on the south. Its name is very ancient for it was the manor of de Blemonte or Blemund in the thirteenth century and the manor-house of the family once occupied what is now Bedford Place. But London did not seriously invade it until about 150 years ago. At the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth the town made a small encroachment on its southern boundary, for Bloomsbury Square was built in 1665, Great Russell Street in 1670, and Great James Street in 1720. The mark of the eighteenth century can still be seen on the architecture of this region particularly in Great James Street, but the rest of Bloomsbury belongs not to the eighteenth, but to the transition period from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. The reason is that north of Great Russell Street and Bloomsbury Square the district was occupied during the greater part of the eighteenth century by noblemen's mansions, notably Montagu House where the British Museum now stands and Southampton House on the north of Bloomsbury Square. The demolition of Montagu House in 1755 and of Southampton House in 1800 seems to have provided the impetus for the building of Bloomsbury as we know it. The whole area was rapidly covered with solid, comfortable, dignified houses in broad streets or great squares. The admir-



able planning and symmetry of the buildings were possible, of course, because the area belonged to a single owner, the Duke of Bedford.

Such is the material history of nineteenth-century Bloomsbury, but districts have a spiritual history distinct from that of their bricks and mortar, and the spiritual history of Bloomsbury is very curious. The little bit of it in the south-east corner, which belongs to the eighteenth century, proved very attractive to dignitaries of the law owing, presumably, to its nearness to the Inns of Court and the Courts of Law. I don't know how many Lord Chancellors and Lord Chief Justices lived here, but it was a surprising number. For instance, Lord Chief Justice Mansfield was living in Bloomsbury Square when the Gordon rioters sacked his house in 1780, and Lord Chancellor Thurlow had the Great Seal stolen from his house in Great Ormond Street in 1784.

When modern Bloomsbury was built, it soon became a fashionable quarter, not indeed for "society", which remained

in Mayfair and never flowed north or north-east, but for the well-to-do business and professional classes. The *nouveaux riches*, as we know from Thackeray, liked the solid, reassuring houses in Russell Square, and the Lord Chancellors and judges seeped into the squares and Gower Street from the south; Lord Eldon, for instance, and Lord Ellenborough, and Sir Samuel Romilly who committed suicide in Russell Square in 1818. But the class to which the new ducal Bloomsbury proved most attractive was that of the artists and writers. The spiritual history of a district is to be found in the lives of its inhabitants, and, from that point of view, the spirit of Bloomsbury is art and letters. No London district has ever housed so many authors and painters as these squares and streets did in the first half of the nineteenth century—indeed, there is hardly a single famous or near-famous man of those professions who did not live in Bloomsbury.

Let me now praise some of the many famous men of Bloomsbury. The poets—they begin with Gray in 1759 in Southampton Row; there was Shelley in Great Russell Street, Cowper in Southampton Row, Coleridge in Southampton Buildings, William Morris in Gordon Street, Christina Rossetti at No. 30 Torrington Square, Swinburne in Great James Street. The great novelists Dickens and Thackeray both lived in Bloomsbury (at No. 48 Doughty Street is the Dickens Museum and Library in the house where Dickens lived from 1837-39, and in which he wrote *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby*); and among the lesser lights were Trollope, Miss Mitford, William de Morgan and Mrs. Humphry Ward. And then there were Richard Steele of the *Spectator* in 1712, and Macaulay, Hazlitt, Lamb, Sydney Smith, Herbert Spencer, and Newman. Isaac d'Israeli lived at No. 6 Bloomsbury Square and so did his son Benjamin, and Gladstone lived in Russell Square. Darwin lived in Gower Street. And finally a long line of artists: among them Constable, greatest of all, Leech, Kean, Burne-Jones, Millais.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century the fortunes of Bloomsbury seemed to wane. The lawyers and the well-to-do disappeared and art and letters drifted away to Chelsea and other parts of London. It became a district of hotels and boarding-houses, and when the spirit of the boarding-house descends upon streets and squares, the effect is dingily depressing. Most districts in large towns, when once they begin to "go down", never recover unless they are rebuilt, but Bloomsbury, early in the present century, suddenly had a revival. Artists and writers re-invaded it, and the well-to-do and even some of the fashionable followed them. Poetry returned to it with perhaps the greatest of modern poets, W. B. Yeats, who lived for some twenty-four years at No. 18 Woburn Buildings (now No. 5 Woburn Walk); Rupert Brooke and Siegfried Sassoon found temporary lodgment in it; and T. S. Eliot, in his publishing capacity, can be claimed as a resident of Russell Square. Mr. Asquith in Bedford Square became Bloomsbury's third Prime Minister. And then it gave its name to a "Group", which was, in fact, not a group, but a company of personal friends whose residential roots were in Bloomsbury and their spiritual roots in Cambridge. Later, as was right and proper, a younger generation of writers and painters came to the district and the term "Bloomsbury" was used, journalistically and usually pejoratively, to describe the most "modern" art and literature. Those to whom the words "Bloomsbury Group" were originally applied, and who lived there, were Lytton Strachey, John Maynard Keynes, E. M. Forster, Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, Virginia and Leonard Woolf.

Then London University came to Bloomsbury with its immense building which towers above Russell Square. Except architecturally this has so far had less effect upon the district than might have been expected, partly because the building itself was occupied, not by the university, but by a Government department throughout the war, and partly because the teaching



centres, except University College, remain outside Bloomsbury. It has, however, for a long time been, to some extent, London's "student quarter", for its innumerable boarding-houses and apartments infallibly attract the student and the foreign visitor. This is why, if you stroll in its streets or squares, you at once note two of its characteristics—young men and women with bundles of books under their arms, and snatches of conversation in every language from German and Bulgarian to Tamil and Chinese.

The recovery or Indian summer in the life of Bloomsbury was due to its essential nature: its houses built for civilised people to live in, its streets which are built for civilised people to walk in and look at with pleasure—real streets, not just rows of houses, and the squares—well, the Bloomsbury squares are beautiful enough to civilise the uncivilised. And Bloomsbury still stands, battered though it has been by the bombs and builders. How long it will stand, no one can say, but one can still take a visitor to Bedford Square and Gower Street and say with truth and pride: "This is London".





*William Sansom*

## SOHO

*Drawings by Leonard Rosoman*

**T**he hunting cry So Ho! So Ho! setting the hare across the Fields; Sir Francis Compton staking out his land from those same disappearing Fields; Monmouth's great mansion in the Square; Thomas De Quincey collapsed and near death on a cold doorstep, receiving life and a warm drink from his sweet prostitute; Mozart at 51 Frith Street; Hazlitt dead of a disordered stomach along at No. 6; King Theodore of Corsica garreted not far away, yet holding court from a chair set on his pauper's bed—these and so many others are the ghosts of Soho.

But more than in other parts they find it difficult to persist, for what has overlaid them is very strong indeed. Powerful elements have intruded where they walk—the energy and colour

of a mixed foreign colony, the establishment of a hundred restaurants and cafés for the gourmet of Continental food, the arrival in Wardour Street of the film trade. Soho has become one of the most various and vivid parts of London, with these



and other elements: others like the barrow market in Berwick Street, once garish in the night of narrow houses and naphtha flares; others like the small urn-steaming cafés of a thriving underworld, the tea-drinking world of small crooks. But of all these the strongest element, and that which most colours Soho's contemporary name, is the presence of restaurants and restaurateurs.

Nevertheless it is less in architecture than in the surface senses of colour and movement that the foreign incursion has

had its greatest effect. More people stand and talk about the street than elsewhere, there is a painting of unusual colours on the door-fronts and window-frames, there are Italian and French and other alien names constantly to glamourise the eye,



there are the foodshops shadowed in their ripe confusion of spaghettis and garlicks and chiantis and tinned exoticisms far removed from the neat pyramid displays of an English shop. Thus, it is always more at eye-level that the alien predominates. Since his business is very individual and usually small there has been little rebuilding by the refugee foodsmen; and if one tastes through the strong condiment at that eye-level and looks up to the other storeys of the houses, there is to be seen a great deal indeed of eighteenth-century London most undisturbed—

the same houses of brown brick and grey plaster that looked down on Hazlitt and Mozart and Theodore. In this way, despite its surface strength, the foreign colony has managed paradoxically to preserve much of the greater truth of old London. And perhaps even those bright colours at street-level approximate more truly than would be otherwise the true atmosphere of the eighteenth century—for in those days the people in the streets wore colours; the classic severities of a façade were complemented by a plinth of colour beneath. In this regard, it may always be finally more pure—though it appears frivolous—to paint one's Georgian door primrose or pink rather than austere, pedantic black.

In this amorphous region radiating from Soho Square roughly to Shaftesbury Avenue, to Oxford Street and towards Regent Street, there straggle the two time-planes of modern colour and Georgian quietude—yet, when food and restaurants are considered, and they of all Soho's varied life must take precedence, another period intervenes. This is a flavour of the *fin-de-siècle*, of late Victorian and of Edwardian times: for it is the period of most of those restaurants. Some indeed have been modernised; but many retain a flavour of the pink silk lampshade, of the encaustic flowered tile, of the browning wall-scene of blue Italian seas. A great population of waiters is to hand—but their black and white loiters with none of the suave shine of the West End proper, those coats and those dickies seem to have been bought a very, very long time ago. Food, not elegance, is the premium. And the food itself, the amply sauced pasta and the dark goulash, the casserole of kid and the cakes of Greek honey, connote another and a past day—for London of the ages of jazz and war has placed eating in the category of those things that must be hurried through to hurry on elsewhere; the slow pleasures of the table for the table's sake seem themselves part of the past. In a sense it is all faded, obscured in the way a side street is obscured, and always

exiled—for these restaurants are run by exiles for exiles. Run by true exiles who have come from their countries to seek a better living, or in the case of political refugees a visa to life itself; and run for their customers, the Continent-loving British exiled from the sun and food they have come to love and who in a London-framed substitute—as it were an oleograph of other climate found suddenly among the grey print of a magazine—approximate to the tune of a clouded sky their savoury nostalgia. The music in the air, unplayed now and half-heard in the imagination, seems still to be the mandolin *sostenuto* of the barrel-organ giving through these northern mists a memory of Sorrento and Neapolitan quays.

This remains the predominant character of the restaurants of Soho—as with the gold-emblazoned Italian Warehouseman and the crowded grocery called after a portentous sovereign of a vanished monarchy, King Bomba of the Two Sicilies. They are relics of a past, but only recently past, era. Yet times, though slowly in Soho, must change. Some of the richer restaurants have been modernised—and there have been new arrivals from politically changing Europe, the most evident of these being the Greeks. The white-painted Greek restaurant has become a new sign of such prandial streets, yet one taking its place consistently with the sunny colours of Italy and the brown and deep red, rich like a sauce, favoured much by the French.

Previously, at some period in the 'thirties, Chinese restaurants opened into a new profusion. Before that, Italian—the Italians were relative late-comers to Soho. Before that, Germans—who strangely at one time outnumbered all other foreign residents. The French were the first. Today, while restaurants and foodshops are mostly Italian and French, there is food also for Yugoslavian and Turkish, Hungarian and Maltese, Swiss and Spanish palates: in fact one can go so far as to select between an Italian-Swiss, a French-Swiss or a German-Swiss

restaurant—though today the food will not always show so subtle a difference.

Such a trade of eating demands its ancillary devices, its manufactories and its storehouses—so between the restaurant-fronts there occur shops that sell giant casseroles and copper saucepans, shops where all the knives of kitchen and restaurant are sold, and shops where the pale pink effigies of chefs display a fine range of checked trousers and tall white crowns. And apart even from these the district abounds with an oddity of trade, as though it were determined to the end to be eccentric—though really much of this must be due to the small industries set up by exiles, the small industrial hives of front-and-back-shop-rooms-and-one-floor-above—so that in a few hundred yards' walk one passes a parquet-seller's, a hide-shop, a shop filled only with buttons, an antiquary, a purveyor of the strange ordnance of the coiffeur's salon, a saw-mill, a violin shop, a shop grotesque with plaster arms and faces for display, a second-hand furrier crammed with fur, a pornographer, a shop dedicated only to uniforms for page-boys and commissionaires with its window full of pill-box caps, and always back to food with the chocolate and cream and floury heaven of a French pastrycook's and the yellow and brown rich carcassing of a Belgian horse-butcher's.

But all the time, above, there lurks the first storey of grimed brick, the leaning eighteenth-century façade, the fine clock-steeple and the great ruined walls of St. Anne's and to the north that other monument of an earlier grace, the weathered red walls of Soho Square.

About three and a half hundred years ago (and that, let us remember, is only seven times as long ago as when the motor-car began to come into general use) all this land was rural. Soho Fields. A good place for hunting the hare. Nothing near by but the small villages of St. Giles and St. Martin. In 1677 the first important development began when land around

Soho Square was granted by King Charles to his Lord Monmouth. Monmouth House was built on a site now occupied by the hospital, and thence for a long time Soho was to become a neighbourhood of quality. The square was called Monmouth Square; houses of the aristocracy lined the adjoining road.



Then in 1685 the Sun<sup>d</sup> King of France revoked the Edict of Nantes, and into Soho came the first of those who were in time to change so much its character—the first French refugees, the Huguenots. Many of these were workers in silver, and they settled in Soho as silversmiths. A century later the descendants of the court which had sent those first protestants to Soho knew a reign of terror themselves—and from the guillotine came a new wave of French refugees, many of whom settled in Soho. And again, nearly a century later, there came the descendants in spirit of those who had sent over the second



wave—this time the communists of 1871. Thus the character of a foreign settlement took shape—French at first, but attracting in its European quality other Continentals, finally Italians, of whom at one time there were no less than ten under specific sentence of death for political reasons. And so the old street names, remnants of earlier and English times, came to take on new associations. Compton Street, the small Piccadilly of Soho, forgot Sir Francis Compton. Dean Street forgot Dean Compton. Greek Street forgot its Greek Church. Thrift Street became Frith Street (sometimes attributed to a Master Richard Fryth, landowner). And such a public house as “The Intrepid Fox” seemed the last outpost of English hunting days—and forgot it was named after the intrepid Whig Charles James Fox.

“The Intrepid Fox” stands in Wardour Street—just where northward begins the last invasion of Soho’s old and changing self. Northwards from there rise the more modern buildings of large film-producing concerns—and the smaller offices, garish posters dusty in their windows, of the smaller companies. Against the sky stand the names of the Twentieth-Century Great—huge letters grimed with Soho dust climb the heights to declare giant productions among the fire-escapes and tiles: giant posters rich with bad bright colours stretch the scarlet lips of lovers over façades of grimed concrete: plate-glass windows—longer windows than those others of Soho’s narrow shops—exhibit an extraordinary world of film equipment, weird-armed mobile cameras and sleek plastic automata glinting with strange silver flashes. Yet all these things—the great new concrete offices, the technicians on the street and all the passing curious understaff of film personnel—all are overlaid with a peculiar atmosphere of gaudy grime, all a little woe-begone and shoddy, all explicit that their business is a quick one and their street narrow and their methods of no lasting taste.

But this is one street only: and always with the word Soho one returns not to the fine old square, not in reverence to the bombed site where Mrs. Cornelys gave her Carlisle House balls—but to Compton Street, the hub, the centre. There—say on a sunny morning in summer—one may sit by the brass-trimmed mahogany of the Café Madrid and through the open doorway absorb the distinguished Soho street scene. For it is this, the un-Londonly movement and the gesticulating clothes, the curious manners and the swift surprise of each fantasy of a passing face, that with the vegetable shops and the food shops and the restaurants and the wine shops constitutes most the character of various Soho.

One may see a sudden negro, loose-limbed and pink of suit; an equally sudden lady from one of the nearby choruses, red and white and blue of face in startling theatre pigment and as patriotic as the colours on the display tins of coffee she passes; and then an Italian, olive still as his country delivered him; a paler Greek; the clear-eyed blind mince of a young lady from the Gore; the more interested tread of a young lady of less restricted leisure; a too smoothly preserved actor; a poet too little preserved. And so on. But it is difficult to tell, really, who are the inhabitants, who the indigenous. Peoples of the warmer Continental countries have always used their streets. Here there are no open-air cafés, and the streets are narrower—but still they betray their heritage, they stand about on the pavements longer than the English do, they stand at their shop-doors and greet across the street their friends of this that is less their district than their “quarter”. The particular of Soho fades somewhere behind—the Square, kinematic Wardour Street, the French Protestant Church, the glassy Gargoyle Club, even St. Anne’s whose bombed walls (one of the most beautiful and spectacular ruins in London) stand opposite and in sight.

It is the immediate foreground that mostly counts, and those mixed many who pass. Restaurateurs and waiters, importers of

chianti and middlemen in claret, honest dealers in spices and dishonest runners for the darker markets, marketeers of black pudding and dealers in white elephants, pastrycooks and pasta-chefs, poofs and prostitutes. And all those visitors drawn from London's declining elegance to these more individual, more ample, more lively scenes of Soho.





*Frances Macdonald*

## CHELSEA

*Drawings by the Author*

When I walk along the King's Road, I like to think that behind some window high up in a nearby terrace there is an unknown poet or painter struggling to produce his thoughts.

Poets, Painters, Philosophers, Physicists, Potters and Pleasure Gardens—these have made Chelsea famous in the past, and I hope that it is so today. Certainly many of our contemporaries whose work we admire have chosen to make their homes in Chelsea, finding here birds of their own feather, free thinkers, choosing this spot for its charm and riverside beauty, retained in spite of industrial development.

The names of its streets remind us of the past. Sloane Square and Hans Place—where Jane Austen and Shelley lived—are called after Sir Hans Sloane, physicist, who gave the Physic Garden in Swan Walk, the oldest botanical garden in England,

to the Apothecaries Company in the middle of the eighteenth century. Alas, this garden can only be explored if you are studying herbs. Sloane's collection of objects and works of art was the nucleus of the British Museum, though he would have liked it to remain in Chelsea Manor which, with the gardens, he had intended opening to the public.

Danvers Street commemorates Sir John Danvers, who first "taught us the way of Italian gardens". These gardens ran from the Embankment to the King's Road—where Paulton's Square now stands. French gardeners settled in Chelsea in large numbers as refugees after 1685, and established nursery gardens in and near the Vale and the King's Road. Today, Chelsea is still a place of gardens, though the space most people cultivate is confined to window boxes, a prize being given annually for the finest show. Those who possess little back or front gardens tend them lovingly; Jubilee Place is typical of many such flower-filled corners off the King's Road.

All Chelsea is fragrant during those three days annually devoted to the famous Flower Show. Here are gathered the finest flowers and plants the English horticulturists can muster. It is a full orchestra of perfume, the smell of the wet moss and soil persisting like bass notes among the variety of fresh, bitter and exotic scents. At the end of the third day a gay procession of visitors carry away the spoils in their arms, leaving a trail of petals on pavements and buses.

The Show is held in the grounds of the Royal Hospital—on the site where Ranelagh was laid out about 1742. This pleasure garden with its Rotunda, which, as we can see from old prints and drawings, resembled the Albert Hall, continued for the next forty years to be the cynosure of the fashionable town, and renowned for its promenades and masquerades, its breakfasts and its balls, its balloon ascents, fireworks and regattas. The gardens were closed in 1804—curiously the masquerades were suppressed "on account of the earthquakes of



1750"—and so the gay Rotunda and its effects were sold for firewood.

The Chelsea Arts Ball, organised by the Chelsea Arts Club, and held annually on New Year's Eve at the Albert Hall, is perhaps the nearest equivalent today. The Ball attracts many well-to-do visitors from the outside world, perhaps because they feel its Bohemian riot represents something that is lacking from their own lives. Certainly no struggling artist can afford to buy a ticket, but art students from each important Art School take part in the organisation and stage some kind of stunt transforming an old car chassis into an imaginative scheme surmounted by all-but-naked students. Each year an artist is invited to design the enormous backcloth and hangings which decorate the hall. The Chelsea Arts Ball should certainly be visited once, if never again!

What a cavalcade of the illustrious and makers of history Chelsea has witnessed! Sir Thomas More came here when it was a little village famous for its fishing and good air. Here, in a house which stood where now Beaufort Street runs down to the river, he put his Utopian ideas into practice. Erasmus writes: "In More's house you would say that Plato's Academy was revived again . . . the house at Chelsea is a veritable school of the Christian religion. There is never any seen idle; the head of the house governs it, not by lofty carriage and oft rebukes, but by gentleness and amiable manners."

Introduced by Erasmus, Hans Holbein stayed in Chelsea for three years, where he painted the More family in 1528. Henry VIII discovered Chelsea's charm when visiting More. In fact he coveted the Manor house and exchanged it for an estate elsewhere, but, finding it later to be insufficient for his requirements, built a new one, fronting the river a little to the east of the present Oakley Street. It is remembered in the name Chelsea Manor Street, and here his daughter Elizabeth spent her childhood.

The King's Road, or King's Private Road, was just a muddy way between the fields until Charles II found it to be a short cut to Sandford Manor, where lived his "pretty witty Nellie". The Queen's Road, now the Royal Hospital Road, leading to the Queen's house in Cheyne Walk, was ordered to be made by the indignant Queen who refused to use the King's Road.

To Swan Walk came Pepys with Mrs. Pierce and Knipp, "thinking to have been merry at Chelsey" in 1666; but found the Old Swan Inn, which stood at its river end, shut up with the Plague, and so, "with great afright turned back (I for my part in great disorder)!"

Chelsea "Reach" stretches along the Embankment opposite Battersea Park and on past the Albert Suspension Bridge to Battersea Bridge. Here I always find myself when I stroll south from Walton Street. I come to watch the sun set up river behind the great chimneys of Lot's Road power-house.

Turner, who loved such sunsets, lived just past Lindsey Row in a house no longer in existence. There is a story of his arrival there, of the landlady's demand for references and an agreement, and of his flourishing a roll of banknotes and saying he would buy the house outright. Finally she wanted her proposed lodger's name. "Name?" he exclaimed, puzzled for a moment, for he had no intention of revealing his identity. "What is your name?" "My name is Mrs. Booth," she replied. "Then my name is Mr. Booth," and Mr. Booth he became in name and something more. He would often rise at daybreak, and with a blanket or dressing-gown carelessly thrown over him, go out upon the railed-in roof to see the sun rise, and to observe the colour flashing back into the pale morning sky. John Ruskin writes: "Cut off a great part from all society first by labour and at last by sickness, hunted to his grave by the malignities of small critics and jealousies of hopeless rivalry, he died . . . and the sun fell upon his face in its setting and rested there as he expired."



Chelsea Reach has retained much of its old character, and some of its old houses such as the fine old Lindsey Row, formerly one stately mansion, which was built by Sir Theodore de Mayerne, who was court physician to four kings, 1639-55. After 1760 it was divided into five houses, now known as 96-100 Cheyne Walk, and in them lived many distinguished people, including John Martin the historical painter and Brunel the railway engineer. Here the Chelsea-born Walter Greaves often visited Whistler, and both did many paintings along the riverside. Wilson Steer lived at 109 Cheyne Walk, and Sickert often came to see him. Today, Dame Ethel Walker lives at 127—her red hat and her little white dog are well known to the locals—and was often seen during the war lunching in No. 96, part of Lindsey House, where there was a little restaurant, started when things were difficult. What a delightful place to have a meal, overlooking the centuries-old garden, beyond which lies the site of More's old house, and how good was Mrs. Joe Woodward's cooking.

My favourite spot is along Lindsey Row. Here swans bask at low tide, and the bank is crowded with boats of all kinds, from yachts to invasion barges, converted into floating homes for people who have defeated the housing shortage. Here Charles II came to bathe, and it was the scene of "brilliant aquatic pageants at which Royalty was present and Handel conducted his Water Music".

It was natural, in so delectable a spot as Chelsea, for meeting-places to establish themselves. The Original Chelsea Bun House, between Union Street and Westbourne Street, had an extraordinary vogue. No trace survives except in the name of Bunhouse Place, and in the Chelsea Bun we know today. The walls of the Bun House were decorated with leaden figures of Grenadier Guards, and portraits of George III, and the counters were laid with "Fine r-r-r-rare buns" which the rank and fashion loved to nibble.

A Chelsea Pensioner pauses for a moment to look at the sunset; he still has the military air. These fine old men give a great deal of character to Chelsea. It is as though they have gathered some of the classical spirit of Wren's Royal Hospital, their home, and they all have great dignity. Their red tunics stand out even amongst the bright uniforms affected by Chelsea's



artists, art students, exhibitionists, the artistic fringe and others who have realised with Ruskin that ugliness is wicked.

But here I would like to burst one of the "Bohemian Bubbles". Augustus John, a familiar Chelsea figure, may look like the artist of tradition, but the decorative gentleman in the "King's Head" whom I have just heard replying to an enquiry about his health ("I have managed to live until this very hour in spite of everything") is probably not a poet or a painter at all. The man you see walking along the road, looking more like someone

in the City, is probably T. S. Eliot. The true artist is usually retiring; it is his poems, his music, his sculpture he would like to be seen, not himself. Incidentally T. S. Eliot lives near No. 4 Cheyne Walk, where George Eliot lived for three weeks before her death.

At No. 16 Cheyne Walk, the Queen's House, lived Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Rossetti. Swinburne came here for the night and stayed twenty-five years! It has been said that George Meredith also lived here, but according to his own account, when he drove over to see his new apartments, "it was past noon, Rossetti had not yet risen, though it was an exquisite day. On the breakfast table on a huge dish rested five thick slabs of bacon upon which five rigid eggs had slowly bled to death! Presently Rossetti appeared in dressing-gown and slippers down at heel, and devoured the dainty repast like an ogre." Meredith did not even trouble to look at his rooms, but sent a quarter's rent that afternoon, and remained in Mayfair. Rossetti allowed the garden of the house to become a wilderness of shrubs and weeds, to be a fit setting for the zoo of wild animals he kept there.

Many famous men, among them Erasmus Darwin, Charles Dickens, Charles Kingsley, T. H. Huxley, Southey, Tennyson, Ruskin, Millais and Whistler, visited Rossetti, and also Carlyle, who had a house at No. 25 Cheyne Row, where he lived for nearly half a century. Carlyle wrote: "The house pleases us much; it is a remnant of genuine old dutch-looking Chelsea, looks out mainly into trees . . . could shoot a gun into Smollett's old house (at this very time getting pulled down)."

Tobias Smollett lived in Lawrence Street at Lawrence House and, "harassed by duns and plagued with ill-health", he wrote *Count Fathom* and *Sir Launcelot Greaves* here, drawing some of his scenes and characters from originals in the neighbourhood. Every Sunday his house was open to "unfortunate brothers of the Quill" whom he treated with beef, potatoes, pudding and

Calvert's entire butt-beer. Among his visitors were Garrick, Johnson, Sterne, and Hunter the surgeon. Frequently they visited Don Saltero's Coffee House at No. 18 Cheyne Walk—kept by Sir Hans Sloane's old servant Salter—where were ten thousand gimcracks round the room, rejects from his master's collection.

In Cheyne Row, where the Roman Catholic Church now stands, William de Morgan produced his pottery. Near by, at the corner of Justice Walk and Lawrence Street, was the Chelsea China Factory, celebrated for its exquisite porcelain; the Victoria and Albert and the British Museum show some very fine examples. Dr. Johnson carried out a series of experiments here, and made regular visits twice a week, having access to all parts of the factory, except the mixing room; but his compositions failed to stand the ovens, and he retired in disgust.

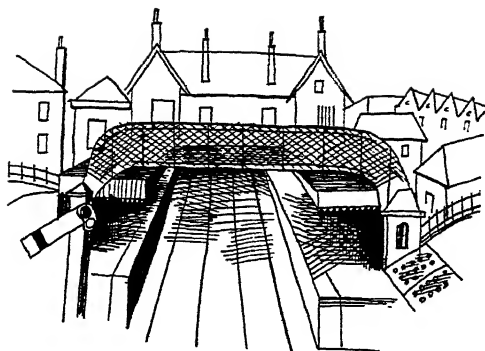
When the Old Church was destroyed by bombs, pessimists said "Chelsea is finished". The loss was certainly terrible, and some things are beyond repair. But how wrong they were, the pessimists. The old stones have been gathered up and carefully numbered, and will be rebuilt, just as the Venetian Campanile, when it collapsed, was built again.

Chelsea is still rich in fine architecture: you should explore the Queen Anne, Georgian, and early Victorian streets, which have not yet been eclipsed by the beehive blocks of "luxury" flats or the ugly Trust buildings; you should explore Cadogan Street, St. Leonard's Terrace, Royal Avenue and fantastic St. Luke's, the first Gothic revival church.

The International P.E.N. Club has recently opened its headquarters at Glebe House, Glebe Place. Once again Chelsea is the chosen home of writers. There has always been a strong affinity between painters and poets, so it was natural that painters should wish to help raise funds to start this club by holding an exhibition in London a couple of years ago, and by giving part of the proceeds to the P.E.N. fund.

Today, half the contemporary talent lives in Chelsea, and the other half visits it there. It is beyond our powers to hazard, from among all the well-known names today, who will outlive the decade, the century, or what few will endure through time. But I think one thing is certain, that Chelsea will continue to be a retreat for creative artists.





*Stevie Smith*

## A LONDON SUBURB

*Drawings by Hugh Walker*

**I** like old suburbs that have grown from country places. They stand ten miles from London and ten miles from a countryside that is still unspoilt because the train service is so bad. The railway station is of the Swiss chalet pattern and has a wooden lace canopy over the platforms. It once took a prize for the beauty of its flower beds.

The shops in the High Street of the suburb are rather ugly. There are a great many shoe shops and sweet shops and hairdressers' shops and drapers. There is an undertaker's shop with a china angel standing on a mauve table cloth. In the office of this shop the undertaker has a blotting pad of mauve blotting paper mounted on a piece of artificial green turf. The pub in the High Street has Georgian bay windows and a Tudor doorway; the turrets on the little tower are from chateau-panto-land; the flagpost mounts a golden fox. There is a

Ritz Café where the ladies of the suburb gather for morning coffee and there are two cinemas, the Palmadium and the Green Hall.

Round the corner from the High Street are the old houses and the village pound and the old pubs and the old church. The old houses have names like Hope House and The Wilderness. They are not very convenient to live in and are frequently let as offices, or they may be museums holding pictures, records and the bones of old animals who roamed in past days.

In the straight streets planted with trees and fringed with grass plots stand the modern houses where the families live. These houses have quite different sorts of names from the old houses. The modern names are written on the garden gates or slung in fretwork over the porch: The Cedars, Cumfy, Dunromin, the more original Dunsekin, Trottalong. There is the house that is called Home Rails (a happy investment, fortune-founding?). There is Deo Data for the learned, Villa Roma for the travelled, Portarlinton Lodge for the socially ambitious. Ella, Basil and Ronald live at Elbasron. There is also Elasrofton which is "not for sale" written backwards.

The place names on the way to the city where the fathers go daily to earn their living are countrified—the mysterious Cockfosters, Green Lanes, Wood Green, Turnpike Lane. Coming nearer to the city there is Manor Park. And what is that curious building, an exact copy of Stirling Castle, that stands to the left of the bus route? It is the Waterworks.

In the high-lying outer northern suburb the wind blows fresh and keen, the clouds drive swiftly before it, the pink almond blossom blows away. When the sun is going down in stormy red clouds the whole suburb is pink, the light is a pink light; the high brick walls that are still left standing where once the old estates were hold the pink light and throw it back. The laburnum flowers on the pavement trees are yellow, so there is this pink and yellow colour, and the blue-



grey of the roadway, that are special to this suburb. The slim stems of the garden trees make a dark line against the delicate colours. There is also the mauve and white lilac.

Many years ago the suburb was a great woodland countryside, it was a forest preserve and across its wooded acres tore the wild boar and the red deer, and after them came the mounted nobility who made sure by the ferocity of the game laws that none but they should hunt.

In Scapelands Hall at the beginning of the century (that is now Scapelands Park and a fine public place) lived the great Lord Cattermole, and he rode with his little son and put his horse Midas at the moat that lies round the Vanbrugh House that is now a Hospital of Recovery: he cleared the moat, but his son did not; the son fell with his head against the brick moat and ever afterwards he was weak in his head. They moved away before the wars came.

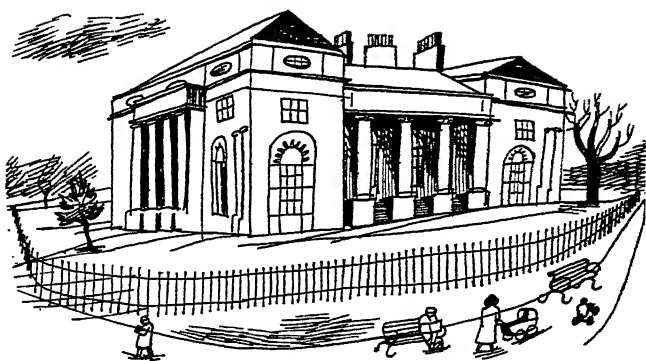
Behind the thick laurel bushes which border the drive that leads to Hope House there lay one day the body of Thessapopoulos Thereidi the international financier, the great Greek



banker. The hand of the assassin had struck him down as he came one night late from his carriage. The body lay three days before it was found by his cook-housekeeper. Hope House is now the Offices of the Metropolitan Water Board, and the coach house that adjoins the main building is in the hands of the agent for the Recovery of Income Tax.

Suburban fast life centres in the club-houses above the shops and cinemas, and in the funfairs at the London side of the suburb which are thought to be rather "common". These funfairs, they say, "let the suburb down". The fast ladies wear plaid slacks and have long yellow-dyed hair and the cigarette is firmly stuck to the lower lip as they trundle out the babies and the beer bottles. The pubs where these ladies are also to be found have names that are older than the suburb—The Fox, The Dog and Duck, The Woodman, The Pike, The Cattermole Arms, The Cock, The Serpent of Hadley, The World's End.

There is much going on in the suburb for those who seek company. There is the Shakespeare Reading Society, the Allotment Growers' Club; there is a Players' Society in connection with the local theatre; there are the amateur dramatic societies (that are such a delicious hotbed of the emotions—chagrin, display, the managerial mind; pleasure in becoming for one evening a spiv or a lord; ingenuity, competition, meeting young men). There are also the games clubs and the political clubs—tennis, golf, cycling; conservative, labour, communist. There is skating on the indoor rinks, and when the frost is hard, skating too on the great lake in Scapelands Park. There is also riding on the spavined hack or, for those who like danger, on the 'chaser whose temper is as vile as his price was low. The anglers who fish the inshore waters of Scapelands Lake have also their club, but theirs is a silent fellowship. Even the young boys fish silently, but sometimes a bite will stir them to words—"Hang on, man".



The most beautiful place in the suburb is Scapelands Park, especially when the weather is wild and there is nobody about except the anglers. When the wind blows east and ruffles the water of the lake, driving the rain before it, the Egyptian geese rise with a squawk, and the rhododendron trees, shaken by the gusts, drip the raindrops from the blades of their green-black leaves. The empty park, in the winter rain, has a staunch and inviolate melancholy that is refreshing. For are not sometimes the brightness and busyness of suburbs, the common life and the chatter, the kiddy-cars on the pavements and the dogs, intolerable?

Christianity in the suburb is cheerful. The church is a centre of social activity and those who go to church need never be lonely. The stained glass windows in the church, which are of the Burne-Jones school and not very good, have been subscribed for by loving relations to commemorate the friends of the church and the young men killed in the wars. There is cheerfulness and courage in the church community, and modesty in doing good.

Now turn for a moment to the inner suburbs of London, those places of gloom and fancy. The names of these suburbs, although at first sight they seem pretty enough, have dank

undertones—Mildmay Park, Noel Park, Northumberland Park. They suggest November fog and sooty chimneys and visions of decay. Behind heavy rep curtains, and an inner curtain of yellowing net, a parrot swings in his cage. At the corner of the street is a tin chapel with a crimson roof. The advertisements at the tobacconist's are enamelled in royal blue and yellow on iron sheets. A canal moves sluggishly between mildewed stone bannisters. There is always a fog in the cemetery. London has captured these places, and the cheerfulness of their pubs and music-halls is a London cheerfulness; they must not be counted as suburbs.

The true suburb is the outer suburb and it is of the outer suburb that I am writing.

In Scapelands Park of a fine Sunday afternoon you may snuff the quick-witted high-lying life of a true suburban community. Here the young girls swing arm in arm round the path that borders the still lake-water. As they swing past the boys who are coming to meet them, the girls cry out, to the boys, "Okey-doke, phone me". In the deck chair beside the pavilion the old gentleman is talking to his friend, "It is my birthday today and my wife would have me adorned. She put this suit on me" (he points to the flower in his button-hole) "and sent to have me adorned." By the cage of budgerigars sits the ageing Miss Cattermole, who is rather mad. She wears a pink scarf "to keep the evil spirits away". She says the vicar is plotting to kill her.

If you sit by the brink of the lake you may catch the flash of a large fish as he passes at depth; or you may lie on your back and look up at the summer leaves of the tall poplar tree that are always moving. They are like fish-scales of pale green. They make a clattering sound as they turn on the wind. The bad-tempered swan hisses at the barking dog, the swan's neck is caked with mud and has a lump on it. At the corner by the woods the water of the lake is very dark,

it is forty feet deep, and speaks again of the past, for here it was that the old Lady Cattermole drowned herself.

"Mother," says the child, "is that a dog of good family?" She is pointing to a puppy bull-dog of seven weeks old; his face is softly wrinkled. His tight velvet skin has already the delicate markings of the fullgrown brindle dog. His stomach is fat as the new-born.

Dogs in suburbs are very popular and are not trained at all not to bark. "Why should my dog not bark if he wants to?" is rather the idea. It is a free country, they also say. But not apparently so free that you do not have to listen to the dogs barking.

Once, waking early, I heard the dog-loving woman from the next house but one talking to her friend in the street below my window. This is what she was saying:

"Seven years old 'e is.

Ever so sweet 'e is.

Ever such a neat coat 'e's got.

Ever so fond of kiddies.

But a dog likes to know oo's going to 'it 'im  
and oo isn't."

This is the unconscious poem that happens sometimes when people are talking.

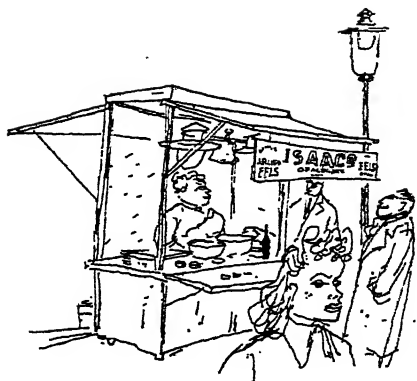
It would be wrong to suppose that everything always goes well in the suburbs. At Number 71, the wife does not speak to her husband, he is a gentle creature, retired now for many years from the Merchant Navy. He paces the upstairs rooms. His wife sits downstairs; she is a vegetarian and believes in earth currents; she keeps a middle-aged daughter in subjection. At Number 5, the children were taught to steal the milk from the doorsteps. They were clever at this, the hungry dirty children. Their father was a mild man, but the mother loved the violent lodger. When they were sent to prison for neglecting the

children, the lodger bailed the mother out but let the father lie.

Life in the suburb is richer at the lower levels. At these levels the people are not selfconscious at all, they are at liberty to be as eccentric as they please, they do not know that they are eccentric. At the more expensive levels the people have bridge parties and say of their neighbours, "They are rather suburban".

The virtue of the suburb lies in this: it is wide open to the sky, it is linked to the city, it is linked to the country, the air blows fresh, it is a cheap place for families to live in and have children and gardens: it smells of lime trees, tar, cut grass, roses, it has clear colours that are not smudged by London soot, as are the heath at Hampstead and the graceful slopes of Primrose Hill. In the streets and gardens are the pretty trees—laburnum, monkey puzzle, mountain ash, the rose, the rhododendron, the lilac. And behind the fishnet curtains in the windows of the houses is the family life—father's chair, uproar, dogs, babies and radio.





*G. W. Stonier*

## A WALK THROUGH THE EAST END

*Drawings by James Boswell*

A cold night in Whitechapel: that forty-foot-wide pavement under the stars takes the wind like a sea-front. They are selling oranges in a doorway; and on nakedly lit stalls wait the cups of jellied eel, which the rare pedestrian will pass by. Tea and indigo, mother-of-pearl and dried fruit lie stacked in warehouses. The tide is going out, with hootings of tug-boats. Overhead, underground, the trains scream and rumble. Look, on Hackney Hill there's a fire; it gapes for a while, falters, and disappears. Betelgeuse returns. Tresses of mist stir the canal. In the late bus entering Blackwall Tunnel two people regard one another, closely yet with indifference . . .

But what is the East End? For most Londoners the other end of their bus route, which they never discover.

The other town: the town outside the gates.

"Too big," I remember feeling when, as a child, the idea of London first forced itself on me, "too big!" It was a nightmare feeling, though not wholly repellent, and it grew.

London grew also, springing up in brick alongside my father's house, blotting out the field opposite with semi-detached dwellings, and over the hill spreading roofs, so that what had once been a suburban outpost now lost itself among crowding streets. This transformation, this (as it seemed to me) treacherous movement of a city that had overtaken us, excited me profoundly: towards the radiant and propelling centre I felt irresistibly drawn; but away from it, as from some source of light or heat, everything appeared coldly desolate. Fascination this way, horror—or something akin to horror—that: such was the double sense implanted in me as a child, and I have explored it through London ever since.

Most of the things I ostensibly enjoyed—and still after many years enjoy—were such obvious charms as the parks and squares, Nash terraces and Wren churches, glimpses of the river, cosy sitting-rooms behind dingy fronts, flowering almond and cherry in the suburbs, West End lights after dark, and so on. The Londoner who is not too hard up and feels the need for clothing his or her life with a certain elegance can pick out some such pattern, pleasurably flitting from one item to the next and turning a blind eye on the, so to speak, dark spaces between. But that (besides being expensive) is to construct a narrowly ideal London of one's own, which will compare unfavourably with Paris, Amsterdam, or Stockholm; the real interest of London lies precisely in those dark huge unnoticeable spaces.

For London is less a city than a tract of urban landscape, five or six times the size of the New Forest. Too big—of course! Too grim—grey in some parts, raw in others. Too removed from all taste and too overbearingly commercial—yes, it can hardly be denied. But the very excess of surroundings can and does in the end express a total character of those who live there,

and the lack of taste may produce unawares natural beauty. It took me several years to discover this, and several more, having made the discovery, to admit it. London exists enormously: it doesn't at all exist to please. Dear, damned, distracting, desolating city! It has never been planned except by inches; sometimes it has grown; more often it has simply overflowed.

One such overflow (an itching house-agents' boom of the 'twenties) passed me by unforgettably in childhood, seeming to entomb with its flood. Another and more important overflow, the first tidal wave of the industrial revolution, produced the East End. From Aldgate to Mile End, thence to the Hackney Marshes and beyond, with only the main exit roads, the railways, the waterways and the docks to determine a pattern, it trickled, crept, and poured; factories bubbled up and little working rows spread out; smoke gushed into the sky; fogs clung; gloom and grime settled; the weak and the sensitive and the unlucky suffered; some found a pillow in salvation or gin, and others fled to the Colonies; a few murdered: such is the imprint in stone, brick and metal of a dark age that has gradually—very gradually—lightened.

In that slow architectural flux, which conserves the past as a glacier does its tragedies of the mountainside, everything at last makes itself seen and known. One *knows*, walking in Limehouse, in Shadwell or Spitalfields, that crimes have been committed: crimes vaster if less melodramatic than those of Jack the Ripper. A foggy day, a dark echoing street at midnight, will bring out the armies of ghosts. Here, hollowed stairs mark the suicides' way to the river; round this lamp played the rickety children; behind these shutters, whence now issues a catch of radio, sat the sweated and starved. A fearful history! But so perhaps is all history, seen from the bottom.

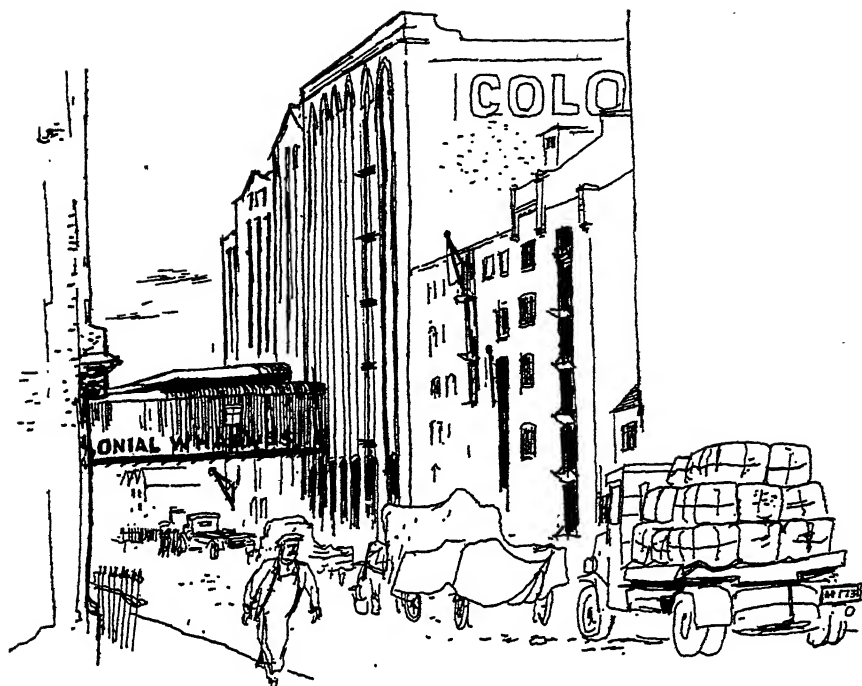
Many walks and rides, during the past twenty-five years, I have enjoyed as a Londoner fascinated by the time and the



place in which I have found myself living. My early impressions of a corroding ugliness touched by neat or lively points were deepened in the years of the slump; falling markets in the City near by had their counterparts in lock-outs, strikes, unemployment queues, processions, mounted police, men kicking their heels at corners. A terrible sobriety had overspread the East End. One didn't like meeting the eyes of those choked men on corners, and the eyes hardened or were lowered in return. Yet, among the young, and especially at night, there was a good deal of jauntiness abroad. The promenade from Whitechapel to Mile End was always gayer than Piccadilly. Crowds circled about the few vividly lit pavements, and steam trickled down the windows of favourite pubs. Things started to get better; jobs miraculously appeared—here and there a slum was hacked down and a block of flats rose to five storeys. The War (that provider of full employment), after initial delay, dropped its first bombs on Shadwell, Wapping and Stepney, and evacuation began. People went, houses went, finally the War itself went, leaving gaps which as yet have scarcely begun to fill. The East End population today, I have seen it reported, is little more than half what it was in 1939.

Take a walk, then; but it should be a longish walk, or what meets the eye will amount to little. There is no better starting place than the time-honoured Tower Hill. Leave the Tower, that curiously cold depository of stone and legend, on your right, cross the road leading to the bold baronial bridge, and at once, to the accompaniment of such names as Nightingale Lane and Redmead Lane, you will find yourself in an architecture that takes the breath away.

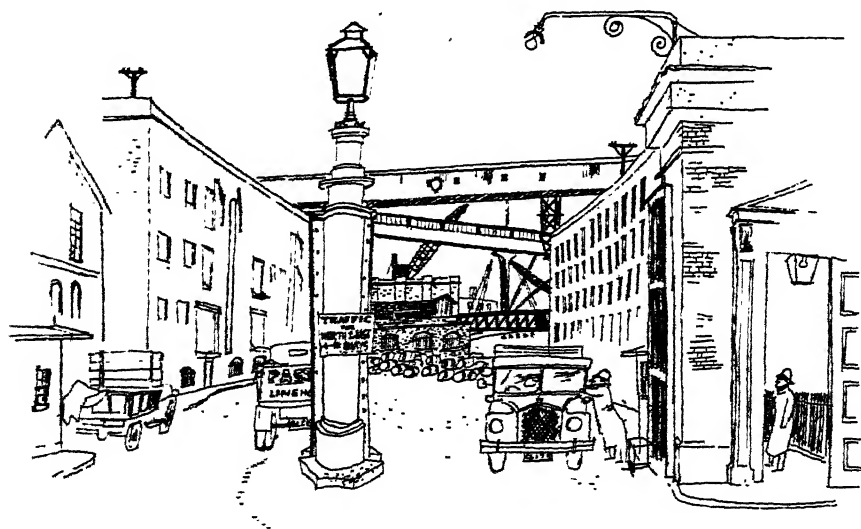
These lanes—Nightingale Lane has lately been renamed Thomas More Street—are roads winding between the warehouse yards, with walls on either side that rise to fifteen, twenty, sometimes thirty or thirty-five feet. The effect is



gigantic, all the more so since it makes itself entirely without decoration. Plain brick of that yellow kind, weathered by grime, which distinguishes the East End: the curves of the road, first this way and then that: after a hundred yards, a giant naked portal with locked doors: and now the uprights reveal a slight curvature of the wall, inwards towards the top, that imparts a moulded strength to what would otherwise be intolerably rigid. For there's nothing else, you understand, to be seen except the bare walls, over them the warehouse tops in the distance, and over all the sky.

After this introduction one knows what the East End has to offer: industrial enormity, and the friendliness of tidy or depressed little town rows. Lack of adornment becomes after

a while a positive merit. So much of London has, at one time or another, suffered from being beautified with fancies soon grown obsolete and grimy that the eye dwells kindly on an unobtrusive plainness. The typical East End street is without decoration; two brick rows front one another across the pavements, each house having a door and a window on the ground floor, and two windows on the upper; a railway probably runs across the end of the street; soot and fog have overlaid the surfaces with a pervasive greyish tint, but the doorsteps will be, for the most part, distressingly clean; and the right proportions, of window to wall, and of street to sky, have been observed, with effects of decency that vie strangely at times with the cramped poverty of the inhabitants. The houses *are*, many of them, too small for their packed families, but they sit modestly, trimly, even harmoniously under heaven. A certain subdued elation goes with the sight of them: the very opposite, let's say, of one's feelings in Earl's Court or Aldwych, or faced with the cluttered, craning hideousness of Victoria Street.





When I set out the other morning, the usual dull February mist that may either lift or thicken by eleven had penetrated even the District Railway carriage where I was sitting. I got out at Tower Hill: there the mist had become a brown fog, though not of the vilest. Its pepper caught at the throat, a hundred yards away objects retreated into shadow, there were lights in the shops, and the nearby clatter of hoofs on cobbles mingled with blanketed sounds from the river. Nightingale Lane—the name still persists, as I discovered from asking my way—looked more than ever enormous, a dream architecture whose monotony the camera would delight to capture; lane succeeded to twisting lane; and after a period, again reminiscent of dreams, in which every road swung back and every advance became a retreat, I emerged into Wapping High Street—not the customary High Street, of shops and buses, but a riverside

defile with lorries loading on either hand and aerial corridors bridging the storeys overhead. To such sights the fog adds the touch bestowed by time on an Old Master. Its thick patina reminds one of Rembrandts and Rubenses; but scrape away the fog from London, and where are the bright or deeply glowing surfaces underneath? The East End grew up in its own carboniferous essence, and when electricity at last dispels it, we shall discover a new town, plainer, healthier, largely rebuilt in a modern fashion, and with few corners for the imagination to roost in. The London of Doré and James Thomson, of De Quincey, Dickens and Arthur Morrison, will have vanished for ever to make room for an L.C.C.-inspired vision of better homes. With everyone else I shall be approving of the new, but glad also to have caught these last dismaying glimpses of the old.

From Wapping I struck north and east across the wide bus streets: Commercial Road, Mile End Road, and their hinterland; thence to the more domestic Roman Road and the cottage fences of Bow. The East End still has its foreign quarter in Whitechapel, predominantly Jewish, its own theatre and concert hall in the People's Palace, its enterprising art gallery, its Yiddish playhouse, its Cockney music-hall near the Docks, its roomy but war-dilapidated Victoria Park, its Petticoat Lane where on Sunday mornings everything second-hand is sold noisily, and one of the few remaining permanent fairs in London. In some places the war has levelled whole areas, or a shattered parade remains as it was in 1940, but with weeds growing; elsewhere the houses have been patched and propped, and new blocks are going up. But despite changes one still encounters a Victorian town, sometimes neat and sometimes nasty. Its voices have a tart commiserating sound, its old invalids crawl about in black, the fresh-cheeked children seem born with a better hope, and in trailing street markets the barrows offer a rich choice and farthings still count.

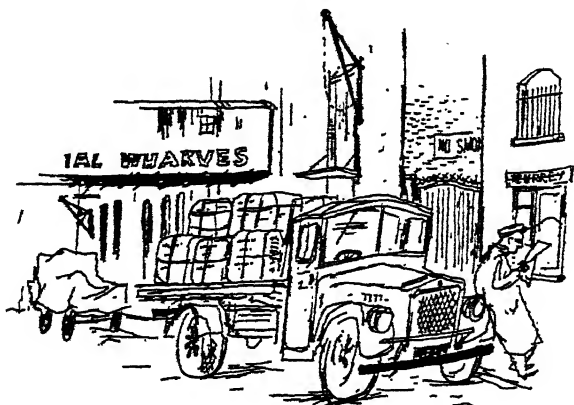
## A WALK THROUGH THE EAST END



The mist had grown lighter away from the river. At the Hackney Marshes I left the town behind, while remaining in it as one can only in London. To the south, gas-works, mills and factories cluttered the estuary; north, beyond a hundred football pitches, the River Lea found its source; and before me, as I turned back to face westward, there were the outskirts of that East End across which I had been travelling. On a road I met several hundred greyhounds, leashed in dozens and enjoying a stroll from a local stadium. Some woodcutters were burning shavings by the mud-plastered Lea. Loudspeaker

voices came from workyards a mile off across the plain. A hawk hovered. I marched over the frosty football pitches and a lonely rook flapped away a field's length ahead of me, alighting on goal-posts and then complaining as my approach drove him on to the next.

Something extraordinary was happening, or about to happen, though I did not at once understand what it was. The sun was trying to come out! Thinning mists revealed a lilac cloud-bank, and over this the weak brightness was becoming instantly brighter. Shadows attached themselves to the goal-posts, the blades of grass sparkled, and in the far distance a window-pane caught the light. It didn't last long, this pale pinky burst of sunshine, but it tricked me out of my own depression. Not fog, I considered, but the sun is the master painter of city-scapes, even in a London that has belonged to the twilight.



*Part Three*

LONDON AT LEISURE





MUSEUMS

For Englishmen, even those who have never so much as seen the pigeons in the colonnade, the name of the British Museum has great significance. It stands for something solid, long-established, imperturbably right; a sound of eternity echoes in the name.

It is true that the British Museum is the oldest of the national museums, yet in fact it is not an old foundation, having been opened less than two hundred years ago. No more than an overnight mushroom growth in the history of London.

The truth is that, although it now seems a necessary part of civilised life, the public display of objects from remote ages and distant places is a relatively new custom. It depended upon the deep preoccupation with a past civilisation, so strongly developed at the Renaissance, and upon the ensuing objective approach to the human and natural world. Without that interest and that detachment there could be no museums.

By the eighteenth century an interest in antiquities, native as well as classical, had become fashionable in England. In many country houses and town mansions wealthy collectors filled not only libraries and picture galleries but also cabinets and curio tables. The Society of Antiquaries of London, whose history goes back to Elizabethan times, was granted its Royal Charter in 1751, a little less than a century after the Royal Society, the premier scientific society, whose premises now confront those of the Antiquaries across the courtyard of Burlington House in Piccadilly. From the first it was the custom for fellows of the Society of Antiquaries to bring exhibits to their meetings—Roman lamps, British coins, weapons of the Bronze Age.

With this background, it was perfectly appropriate to the period that the first national museum should have been formed by the amalgamation of private collections and housed in what had been a great private mansion.

Among the collectors concerned, Sir Hans Sloane so far overshadowed the rest that he is usually accepted as the founder of the British Museum. In his will he left his "noble collection of Natural History, his large library and his numerous curiosities . . . to the use of the public" on generous terms. At his death in 1753 an Act of Parliament provided for the purchase and endowment of his collections together with certain other private libraries of rare books and manuscripts. The funds were raised by lottery, a form of public benevolence that would now be illegal.

Good fortune attended the enterprise, for when premises were needed for the new museum, Montague House in Great Russell Street was offered, "a large and magnificent building finely ornamented with paintings" and set in a spacious garden. It was bought, equipped, and opened in 1759. As a contemporary writer said, it might "justly be esteemed as an honour and ornament to the nation".

Sir Hans had left his collections for "the use of the public", but the eighteenth-century idea of the public was not our own; there was no thought that any man, woman or child who thought fit to turn in at the entrance should be free to do so. Entry was limited to "studious and curious persons" who had made written application in advance and had been approved by the Principal Librarian. Having passed this test, they were admitted by ticket, a few at a time, and conducted through the collection under strict supervision. Children were forbidden.

Montague House had appeared to be "large and magnificent", but a mounting stream of gifts, bequests and State purchases soon made it far too small to hold the national collections. A vast new building on the same site was begun

in 1823 under the architect Sir Robert Smirke. It was completed in 1852, and although there have been many additions since, notably the Edward VII Gallery on the northern side, the present building is essentially Smirke's creation. The quality of his work is most conspicuous in the Ionic colonnade of the south front on Great Russell Street; here neither London grime nor the litter of pigeons can detract from the dignity of its massive scale or the fine detail of the Grecian order.

Inside, the British Museum is a place of monumental halls, galleries and staircases. If they are too monumental for modern methods of museum display, their often noble spaciousness helps to make the visitor aware that he is at the heart of one of the greatest monuments to humanity, a concentration of achievement drawn from every part of the world and all ages since the emergence of man.

From the first the British Museum has always been the national library as well as museum. The collections of the library departments range from Greek papyri and early Christian manuscripts of the utmost importance, to a modern library that is swollen every year not only by a huge intake of foreign books, but also by the receipt under the Copyright Act of a copy of every publication of whatever kind produced in this country. Perhaps the greatest change made to Smirke's building was the roofing of his central courtyard to form the famous circular Reading Room, under whose dome, larger than that of St. Peter's, so many of the world's great scholars and writers have worked. Karl Marx read there, sitting undistinguished among men whose labours would make not the faintest ripple on the current of events.

It is difficult at the present time to describe what is to be seen in the British Museum among its collections of Egyptian, Assyrian, Greek, Roman, Oriental and British antiquities, of coins and medals and ethnographical material. The building is still partly ruinous after the severe damage it suffered

during the war, and exhibits are being opened piecemeal. Furthermore, there are plans for a great extension of the buildings, and even if this must be delayed it is unlikely that the ethnographical collections will ever again be shown in their old, overcrowded gallery.

There is, however, one innovation that is wholly to the good so far as the ordinary visitor is concerned—the visitor, that is to say, who is not a specialist and who hopes to gain a general impression of the riches of the museum in a few hours. The imposing length of the Edward VII Gallery now contains as a single exhibition the finest treasures of all departments except those of Prints and Drawings and Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities. The result is perhaps the most dazzling display ever to be brought together in one gallery. Here are masterpieces of every kind, from Nigerian ivories and Mexican masks to Greek vases, Chinese porcelain and Renaissance jewels. Among the British antiquities that may be less familiar to many visitors special mention may usefully be made of certain things of outstanding interest. There are the massive Bronze Age goldwork necklets, torques and horse-armour—and the superb yet little-known art of the Celtic Iron Age, one of those rare periods when Britain surpassed all Europe in the visual arts. The most prosperous side of Romano-British life is illustrated by the silver table service of dishes, bowls, goblets and spoons from Mildenhall in Suffolk, and the richly ornamented tray that is known as the Corbridge lanx; while the wealth and craftsmanship of the pagan Anglo-Saxons are best represented by a recent discovery, the treasure of jewellery, weapons, armour, silver dishes and other furnishings of a royal ship-burial excavated just before the war at Sutton Hoo in Suffolk. Among the medieval collections, attention is called to the Royal Cup of the Kings of England, not only because the combination of enamelling and pearls with an extreme simplicity of form is extraordinarily pleasing, but also for the sake of the romantic

history that it has known since it was first brought to England as a gift for King Henry VI.

Departmental galleries that are already restored and open to the public include those for Prints and Drawings and Egyptian Antiquities, the latter containing among many more important things the collection of mummies that has always been the most popular show in the whole museum. The single Babylonian room that has as yet been restored contains some of the famous early Sumerian finds of El Ubaid and Ur of the Chaldees; any selection is invidious, but it is worth looking with particular care at the gold and lapis-lazuli ram from Ur. There is something about this creature, reared so stiffly on its hind legs, life-like yet stylised and charged with an odd, inexplicable intensity of feeling, that summarises many of the best qualities of early Sumerian art.

Egyptian, Greek and Roman sculpture galleries may open during 1949; the renowned "Elgin Marbles" from the Parthenon at Athens will be shown as soon as possible, although unhappily not in the new building that was specially designed for their display.

The British Museum at Bloomsbury, even in its present reduced form, is still far too large for a mere casual visit to be repaying. Visitors may like either to go there a number of times, never staying long enough to fall into that state of surfeited exhaustion so often experienced in museums, or to select a few limited subjects that can be studied in detail and at leisure.

In the "noble collection of Natural History" that formed a part of the original Sloane bequest there were included such items as "crabs, lobsters, birds and their parts, quadrupedes, Vipers, serpents, etc., Miscellaneous things natural" as well as many geological specimens and scientific instruments. Soon after the completion of Smirke's Bloomsbury building the congestion had again become so serious that it was decided that the



*The Royal Gold Cup of the Kings of France and England, late 14th century. The inscribed cylinder was added in 1610. In the British Museum*

Natural History and Science collections ought to be housed separately and Bloomsbury left as a museum concerned exclusively with man. This enterprise did not move so smoothly as the constitution of the British Museum a century before. In 1862 a Bill to transfer the Natural History collections to South Kensington was defeated in Parliament, and although it was passed the next year further setbacks followed. The chosen architect died suddenly and many delays attended the preparation and approval of new plans by Alfred Waterhouse. At last, in 1871, they were ready and work began on a site beside the Cromwell Road that had been hollowed out for the reception of the Exhibition of 1862; just across Exhibition Road the buildings that were to become the Victoria and Albert Museum were still under construction.

The decade of its execution, 1870 to 1880, and its designer, Alfred Waterhouse, put the architecture of the Natural History Museum near the summit of an important phase of the Victorian Gothic Revival. A building always intended for the display of scientific specimens is an uninhibited essay in the Romanesque style, with a towered entrance and a central hall that has many of the features of a twelfth-century cathedral. Outside and in, it is heavily enriched with terra-cotta. As a contemporary writer said, it formed "a striking feature of the neighbourhood". It has never ceased to do so, and is indeed a remarkable monument to one phase of English architectural history. But as a Natural History Museum, even less than Smirke's building does it conform to the ideas of the twentieth century. The stuffed elephant and dodo, the dinosaurs, giant sloths and other fossils look like creatures that have strayed into some ecclesiastical stronghold and been petrified by the incongruity of their surroundings. Even the showcases have a slightly apologetic and temporary air. As for the terra-cotta plaques of fish, birds and beasts that ornament the walls, they make it hard for the eye to rest on the beasts, birds and fishes in the cases.



However, these architectural oddities are interesting in themselves, give the museum a most distinctive character, and need not deter anyone who really wishes to study the exceptionally fine collections. There are examples of almost all plant and animal forms that inhabit, or have inhabited, the earth, including such remains of fossil man as the Swanscombe and Piltdown skulls that are among the most significant in the world for the study of human origins. A well-designed exhibition illustrates the evolution of life from its first stirrings to the emergence of the mammals. An exception to the gothic elaboration of the rest of the museum is to be found in the Whale Room, a large modern hall that gives a dramatic impression of the scale and perfection of the living architecture of the great sea mammals.

The ordinary visitor sees only a small fraction of the museum's possessions. The specialist collections, many of them brought back by the travellers, explorers and scientists of one of the most restless of nations, are available for study in the five departments of Zoology, Entomology, Geology, Mineralogy and Botany. Experts and students will generally be aware of the ample resources that the British Museum of Natural History can put at their disposal.

Adjoining the British Museum of Natural History on the other side of Exhibition Road is the museum now known as the Victoria and Albert. This was the first foundation in the South Kensington area, which the Prince Consort wished to see built up as a centre of enlightenment for the backward English. Indeed, it is in every way fitting that Albert's name should, in the course of history, have become attached to this museum, for from the first its purpose was didactic. Unlike the other principal museums it did not originate as a display of specimens for the delight of the curious or the satisfaction of the studious but was designed with a practical end in view. The collections were to illustrate periods of artistic achievement, certainly, but with the purpose of encouraging the application of art to industry. The

Victorians saw that the mass of goods flowing from their new machines lacked something which they sincerely admired in the products of the past; the factory hands born to them in such numbers by a Malthusian Providence were quite without the traditions of design and skill that had been inbred in their predecessors. Recognition of the need for industrial schools of design was forced upon the Government and in 1837 the first was established in London under a grant from the Board of Trade. When the time came for the dismantling of the Great Exhibition of 1851 a number of exhibits notable "entirely for the excellence of their design or workmanship" were acquired on behalf of the Science and Art department that had grown from the earlier School of Design. After a short stay in Marlborough House these collections were moved to a temporary iron building in Exhibition Road, where they were opened to the public by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in the year 1857. Permanent premises were begun at once and went forward side by side with the Romanesque pile of the Natural History Museum. Their completion in 1884 was followed by a brief pause during which treasures of all kinds poured into the South Kensington Museum, as it was then called. In the last year of the nineteenth century, the old Queen, delighted by all such proofs of her husband's foresight and greatness, was able to lay the foundation stone for a further large extension fronting on Cromwell Road, and to command that the museum's name be changed to the Victoria and Albert. It is this building, far more than the Victorian portions, that give the museum its familiar, over-elaborate, mongrel, yet curiously impressive character.

Already before 1939 the acquisition of a wide range of art treasures had obscured the old industrial intention of the museum, yet its influence was still shown in the arrangement of the galleries. Although there were period rooms and individual works of art, exhibits were in the main classified by materials,

such as metal and woodwork, book production, ceramics, textiles and so forth—sometimes a monotonous form of display for the ordinary visitor. The building was damaged during the war and, as at the British Museum, galleries are only gradually being reopened. The plan is considerably changed. Although the old arrangement by crafts and materials will be partly maintained, the most important collections are now shown as illustrations of historical periods and phases of art—as, for example, in the rooms devoted to Northern and Italian Gothic.

The Victoria and Albert is mainly concerned with the arts and fine crafts in Europe since the beginning of the Middle Ages, but it also possesses Oriental ceramics, textiles, drawings and paintings. Its most important collections include Italian Renaissance sculpture of the highest merit, English furniture, embroidery, jewels and miniatures, a remarkable series of keyboard musical instruments, and the famous Raphael cartoons that are on loan from the King. There is also a loan exhibition of many magnificent objects formerly belonging to the first Duke of Wellington. Among the pictures are examples of the work of the best English water-colourists, including Sandby, Girtin, Cotman, Turner and De Wint. The Constable collection contains many of the small sketches and oil studies that seem to have a stronger appeal for us today than his big, highly finished canvases.

The Indian Section of the Victoria and Albert Museum is at present housed in the Imperial Institute building that lies to the north of the Science Museum. The collections are rich, particularly in sculpture, and range over Tibet, Nepal, Burma and Ceylon as well as India and Pakistan.

The Victoria and Albert has one of the best art libraries in the world, and a great store of photographs and lantern slides. It also maintains a circulating department that sends material all over the country, particularly to colleges of art and to schools.



*Page from 'Hours of the Virgin', French, c. 1400. In the British Museum*

Since the war the museum has staged a large number of important loan and special exhibitions as part of a policy of variety and change that has already made the Victoria and Albert one of the few lively centres of artistic interest in London.

In its history the Science Museum, South Kensington, is closely related to the Victoria and Albert. Until the beginning of this century the scientific collections that were acquired after the 1851 Exhibition remained as a part of the South Kensington Museum, and it was only in 1909, when the South Kensington became the Victoria and Albert, that they were moved to premises on the other side of Exhibition Road. About twenty years ago a large extension was built and at that time it was unfortunately considered necessary to conceal what is a straightforward piece of modern functional architecture behind a classical façade with an Ionic order in Portland stone.

The museum is devoted to the history of science and technology and the application of science to industry. It is a depository for all those inventions that after a few years as extraordinary novelties inevitably soon come to be recognised as quaint antiques. Among them is the Rocket locomotive of 1829, that may claim to be the ancestor of all steam engines, and the magnet used by Faraday for his early experiments in electricity.

The six departments of the Museum are for Physics, Chemistry, Industrial Machinery and Manufacture, Power Production, Civil Engineering and Land Transport, and Air and Water Transport.

There is a popular Children's Gallery with many dioramas, models and attractive devices such as a door that is opened by an invisible ray, and an artificial rainbow. Indeed the whole museum is suitably equipped with exhibits that light up, revolve and grow variously animated at the press of a button. A good science library is open to the public.

The Natural History Museum has a Department of Geology that has grown out of many thousands of specimens that formed

a part of the astonishingly varied collections of Sir Hans Sloane. This department is concerned with geology as a theoretical science.

The most recently established of all the South Kensington museums is the Museum of Practical Geology that was completed in 1933, just in time to accommodate the disastrous London Economic Conference. It stands in the angle between the Natural History and Science Museums, and is entered from Exhibition Road. Like the Science Museum, it is a modern steel building with a classical façade, this time predominantly Corinthian. Steps lead up to a single rectangular hall with a central aisle, side bays, and two tiers of surrounding galleries.

The museum is closely related to the work of the Geological Survey and to the study of economic geology and mineralogy. Nevertheless, its exhibition galleries are arranged to appeal to the general public.

Immediately on entering, the visitor is confronted by a huge slowly revolving globe with the earth's main geological formations picked out in coloured relief. At the opposite end of the aisle a model of Vesuvius breaks into vivid eruption with clockwork regularity. In addition to an excellent series of dioramas, the centre of the hall is occupied by an alluring display of precious and semi-precious stones. These gems are accompanied by striking examples of their use by jewellers and other craftsmen. Most unexpected of all, and perhaps the more delightful because incongruous, is the gold and enamel snuff-box presented to the distinguished geologist Sir Roderick Murchison by the Czar Alexander II.

The side bays and galleries of this Museum illustrate the principal geological processes and the scenery and geological history of the British Isles.

If Sir John Soane's Museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields is far removed from the South Kensington centre geographically, it is still more remote from it in history and character. The Soane



*Florentine Dish of tin-glazed earthenware, c. 1450  
In the Victoria and Albert Museum*

Museum is unique in being the creation of one individual, a man of most singular personality. This individual, Sir John Soane, might be said to be the antithesis of all that was represented by the Prince Consort, to personify the eighteenth century with as pure a genius as that of Albert for the nineteenth. Sir John was born in 1753 and, with a perfect sense of historical fitness, died in the year of Queen Victoria's accession.

He himself built the house and museum at Number 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, as well as the two flanking houses, Numbers 12 and 14, and some elements of their internal construction illustrate in miniature the distinctive character of Soane's architectural genius. For an architect of original genius he certainly was, and the fact that much of his work has been destroyed adds to the importance of a museum that was not only designed by him but contains the drawings and models of many of his greatest buildings.

Number 13 has been little changed since Sir John lived there: it represents the expression of an imagination that was itself in large part necessarily an expression of its age. Yet beyond the self-conscious cultivation of the grotesque and macabre that belongs to eighteenth-century romanticism, some visitors may think that they can feel in this curious establishment a slight taint of some more personal and more genuine corruption.

It is essential to the character of the Soane Museum that its contents should be crowded and strangely assorted; more is packed into the space than is reasonably possible and this gives an intricate richness of texture that cannot be captured in words. There are innumerable fragments of classical sculpture, real and imitated, Roman busts and urns, mosaics, altars and a life-size model of a part of the Temple of Castor and Pollux in Rome. Many of the pictures, as well as the library, show Soane's architectural interests, but the most important of the paintings are the two Hogarth series, *The Rake's Progress* and *The Election*.



From the little picture gallery the visitor can look down on to an extraordinary manifestation of the Romantic ideal. In his basement Soane constructed the cell of an imaginary monk, Padre Giovanni, a chamber hung with pieces of gothic carving, shackles and other gloomy medieval relics. The cell looks out on to a space intended to represent Padre Giovanni's cloister and tomb. Near by are the "catacombs", a room once lined with niches holding Roman cinerary urns, and the "Sepulchral Chamber" with the fine alabaster sarcophagus of Seti I that was brought from Egypt as early as 1817.

Enough has been said to show that Sir John Soane's Museum has an interest that greatly exceeds its size or the worth of its possessions. It contains many curious, and a few valuable, things, but essentially the house and museum are themselves one unique exhibit, a delicately fossilised moment preserved for us in the flow of time.

The small museum that is contained in the vast Victorian Gothic building of the Public Record Office has something of this quality of preserving the feeling of particular moments, yet at the same time it conveys most powerfully a sense of the long continuity of British history. It has documents relating to momentous events; it has many examples of the calligraphy and signatures of famous men and women. But in addition to these things that have a dramatic appeal because of their association with great occasions and people, this museum holds records of the greatest importance for historical research: not only the two volumes of William I's Domesday Survey of 1086 that are certainly its most sacred possession, but also the unique series of Chancery and Pipe Rolls, in which are preserved almost unbroken records of seven centuries of the nation's legal and financial affairs.

In addition to these museums that are outstanding in scale, importance or special interest, there remain several more that should certainly be seen by visitors who are making more than

a hurried visit to London. There is the Imperial War Museum in Lambeth Road where specimens and records making a memorial to the 1914-18 World War are housed in a late Georgian building that was once Bethlehem Hospital, London's oldest lunatic asylum. Very different is the Geffrye Museum, where early eighteenth-century almshouses surviving in the thick of London's East End are being used for a most interesting educational experiment. Hundreds of children from the neighbourhood who go there in and out of school hours are getting quite a new idea of history from its well-arranged period rooms.

Much higher place would, of course, have been given to the London Museum with its collections illustrating the whole history of the capital, were it not at present closed to the public. Lancaster House, St. James's, in which it was once most nobly housed, has been taken for diplomatic purposes and the collections are in storage. They are to be transferred to Kensington Palace, the royal residence in Kensington Gardens.

Finally, anyone who can make the short journey should most certainly visit the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich, where there are paintings, models, nautical instruments and personal relics worthy of a seafaring and naval people. The great attraction of Greenwich, however, lies in its setting by the river and in its architecture. The Queen's House and nearby buildings containing the museum, together with Greenwich Hospital (now a naval college) and the Observatory form a group of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century classical architecture as distinguished as any in Europe.

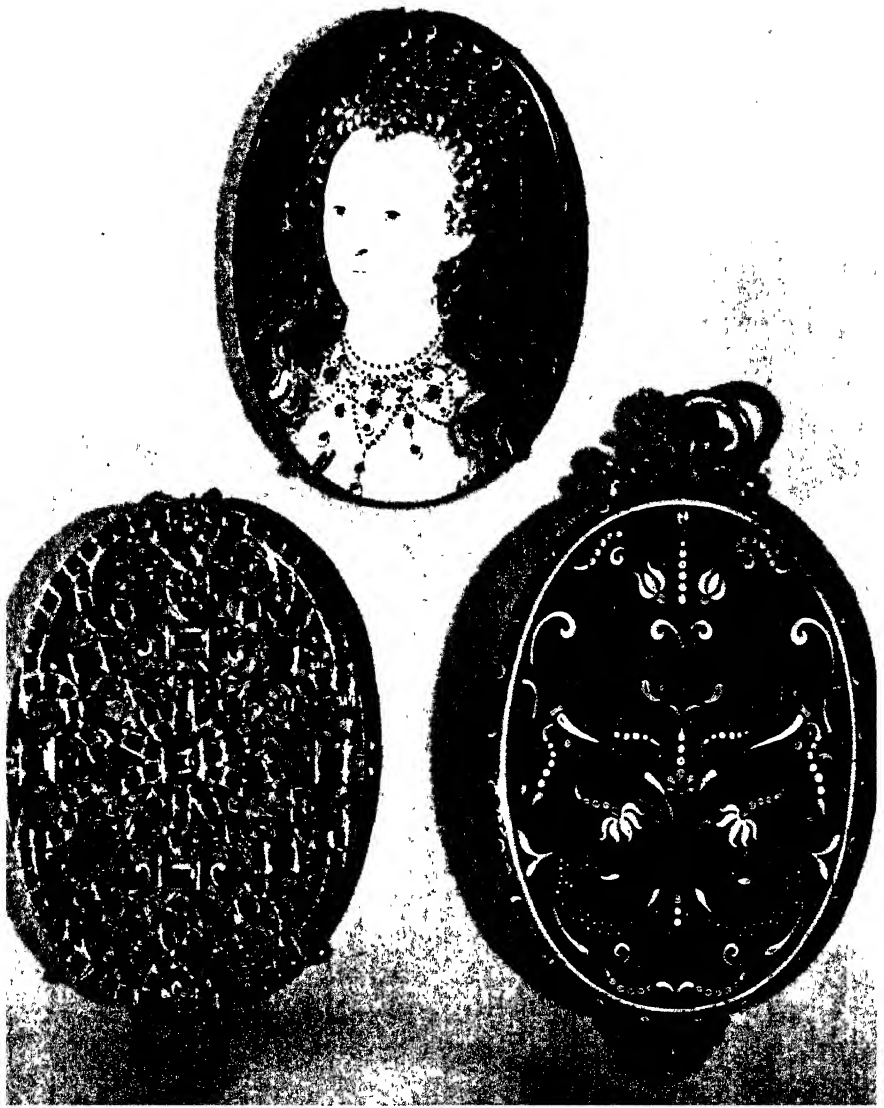
The visitor to a foreign city always has the privilege, denied, except at rare moments, to its inhabitants, of seeing the place as a show, with the citizens unconscious actors. A greengrocer cannot simply be selling fruit and vegetables for ordinary tables and sideboards—the shop is a brightly coloured toy theatre.

This heightened interest caused by detachment from the scene can be enjoyed to some extent in museums. London museums need not be seen only as buildings for the display of collections: they are also places where Londoners or people from the country go in tens or in thousands for a greater variety of reasons than it is possible to imagine.

There cannot any longer be many who go into the galleries simply for warmth and shelter, but there are certainly a few who use them for meeting their friends; perhaps not too much attention should be paid to them. Then there are school-children, now usually intelligently led in pursuit of a precise educational goal, but still sometimes let loose as a noisy pack more conscious of one another than of the exhibits. Even so, many of them will carry away for the rest of their lives some vivid impression: an Egyptian sailing in the Ship of the Dead, a cluster of crystals or a jewelled pommel once held in the hand of the Duke of Wellington.

After the war, when for far too long the British Museum remained closed, one would often meet an elderly couple or a mother and child who had made the long journey up from an outlying borough staring with almost incredulous disappointment at the big iron gates. They did not always know just what they had hoped to see, but they wanted tremendously to have been to the British Museum.

There are people, now that the gates are open here and at other museums, who still make their visits without any special purpose, straying wherever their feet take them—perhaps making a special effort to reach the Egyptian mummies, Stephenson's Rocket or the Great Bed of Ware. Others come with a purpose as definite as theirs is vague; they come to see one favourite gallery, even one particular object. At the extreme of purposefulness are the students with theses or examinations in mind, who hang over the cases while they make their notes and drawings.



*Miniature of Queen Elizabeth by Nicholas Hilliard, 1547-1619, with its original case  
In the Victoria and Albert Museum*

The British Museum Reading Room has a magnetism of its own. Students, scholars and eccentrics from all over the world are drawn in there and flow out again to fill the cafés and restaurants of Bloomsbury, many of them living proof that in our society poverty is the reward of devotion to unpractical ends.

Museums may be relatively recent among the amenities of London, but they have become very much a part of its life. Even those who never visit them like to feel that they are there, that they possess these rich collections associated in such a variety of ways with their own history.



*'The Virgin of the Rocks'. Oil painting by Leonardo da Vinci in the National Gallery*



*'The Painter's Daughters'. Oil painting by Thomas Gainsborough in the National Gallery*

LONDON ART GALLERIES

For the wealth of works by the great masters of the past contained in its public galleries and museums, London can claim an eminence equal to that of any other of the world's capitals, while since the end of the First World War the facilities which it offers for satisfying an increasing interest in contemporary production have notably improved. Painting has become popular and—a healthy sign—matter for widespread and ardent controversy. In recent years, two such dissimilar topics as the advisability or otherwise of cleaning the pictures in the National Gallery, and the merits or demerits of Picasso have aroused heated argument in a large section of the Press and drawn record crowds to the exhibitions which were their source. From their refuge, during the last war, in caverns in the Welsh mountains and cellars in remote country mansions London's art treasures have now been restored to their metropolitan home, where they shine with new-found lustre; at the same time, liberal wall-space has been accorded in the city's public galleries for the accommodation of shows of other countries' ancient and contemporary art.

The origin of this activity, now accelerated out of all relation to its gradual development in the course of the last century, was the foundation of the National Gallery. This took place in 1824, when Lord Liverpool's Government, at the instigation of King George IV, bought for the country thirty-eight pictures from the then famous collection of Mr. G. G. Angerstein at a cost of £57,000. They were first exhibited in Pall Mall, but transferred to the present Gallery in Trafalgar Square on its completion in 1838. It is appropriate that the building which holds so great a number of the nation's finest possessions in



art should also command one of the capital's most imposing views, though the Gallery itself was dubbed in its early years, from the name of its architect, "Wilkins's Pepper-pot". Its neo-classic dome and heavily-columned front are now, however, more kindly regarded as a noble specimen of their style.

The gibe made not only abroad but also by native critics that the English are a philistine race, following Louis XIV's slur on "a nation of shopkeepers", is belied by the State aid granted for the National Gallery's upkeep, and the considerable sums given by individual donors and public subscription towards the purchase of works of art. In 1853 an annual payment of £10,000 was allocated from the national revenue for buying pictures, and though it has now been reduced to £7,000, various governments have augmented this amount to enable the acquisition of particular works. Thus Lord Salisbury's Government in 1885 paid £87,500 for the *Ansdei* Raphael and Van Dyck's "Charles I". Three years later, it gave £25,000, and twelve years later £7,000, towards the purchase of other works, which included the group of Saumarez Rembrandts. More recently, the National Art Collections Fund, raised by public subscription, has won for the National Gallery such masterpieces as the Rokeby Venus, the Norfolk Holbein, Masaccio's "Madonna and Child" and Tintoretto's "Morosini".

It has been the Gallery's policy to acquire, as far as possible, works covering the whole range of classical European art, from the primitives onwards: its two earliest paintings, indeed, "Christ and St. Mary Magdalene" and "Entombment of the Virgin" are of Byzantine provenance, the former having been bought from a monastery in Crete. It is doubtful whether, without entering into realms of extreme obscurity, it would be possible to name an old master unrepresented in the collection. But what is important is that, Giorgione among the few exceptions, the great masters are shown in great works, like Raphael

in the *Ansidei Madonna*, Leonardo in "The Virgin of the Rocks" or *Francesca* in "The Nativity", to mention only the Italian School. And of the rare and exquisite Vermeer, the Gallery can boast of two examples, "Lady standing at the Virginals" and "Lady seated at the Virginals". Yet where some artists shine in the splendour of a single outstanding picture, like Uccello with "The Rout of San Romano", others, by fortunate chances of acquisition, make a generous showing. Of these, for instance, are Raphael, Poussin, Velasquez and Rembrandt, while it is not surprising that the leaders of the English School, from Hogarth to Turner, should be especially well represented.

With regard to the English School, however, there is an overlapping between the National Gallery and its younger branch, the Tate Gallery, which is officially linked with it by constitution. And in the case of the Tate, there is again an appropriateness of situation; for Whistler is one of its glories, and it overlooks the Thames, which is essentially Whistler's river, not far from the very reaches that he painted. Built where a penitentiary stood before, it was given to the nation, along with sixty-five pictures, by Sir Henry Tate in 1897. Its architect, S. R. J. Smith, to some extent reproduced the characteristics of the National Gallery in the matter of dome and columns. It has since been enlarged, receiving the addition of the Turner Wing in 1910, and, by the munificence of Lord Duveen, a wing devoted to Continental painting and a sculpture gallery. These enlargements are evidence of the Tate's progressive character: it has grown with the broadening of public taste and, in the admission to its walls of works by members of the advance guard in English art, it has shown itself ahead of the standard in modernity recognised by the Royal Academy. This has sometimes provoked the complaint that it has given the cachet of authority to manners of painting which are still in the experimental stage, such as abstraction and surrealism;

but it can claim that a catholic principle of selection has at least reasonably assured that in the future, when time makes its ultimate awards of fame, there will be no sins of omission for which the Gallery could be reproached.

It is divided into two main sections, of which one provides a survey of the English School from the eighteenth century to the present day, while the other is devoted to Continental art. The representation of the earlier English masters it shares with the National Gallery, with which its own exhibits, if less imposing, yet vie in interest. On the whole, the Tate may be said to represent our classics on their more familiar side. It is rich, for instance, in examples of the conversation-piece as practised by Devis and his followers, who, at the beginning of his career, included Gainsborough. The charm of this delightful genre, usually so candid in execution and so expressive of the sentiment of its period, has recently gained it a considerable vogue, a factor in which is possibly the relief it affords from too much eighteenth-century portraiture in the grand manner declining into a convention. And if the conversation-piece be given a dramatic turn, the result is Hogarth, a view of the reduction of whose invention, by way of Haydon and Wilkie, to the Victorian anecdote-picture may be exhaustively followed out at the Tate.

But before reaching the Victorians, the Blake and Turner collections call a halt, and only by a visit to the Tate can an adequate knowledge of those masters be acquired. One a visionary of dreams, the other a visionary of nature, they early brought into English painting an imaginative element which has continued side by side with the tradition of Hogarthian realism, which, although it has undergone dilution, remains a prevailing characteristic of the school. This imaginative strain, with less power but a more deliberate technical intention, was developed in the works of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, a compendious display of whose achievement is another of the

Tate's special features. But English art is more usually the product of individuals than of groups, and the rich variety of its display of native moderns makes it the London equivalent of the Luxembourg Gallery in Paris.

Whistler's "Battersea Bridge", ferociously criticised by Ruskin, whose vituperation caused the painter to bring a libel action against him from which Whistler obtained the derisory damages of a farthing, remains a key picture of the Tate's modern section, both on its own account and as an instrument of challenge to Ruskinian authority. Augustus John's "The Smiling Woman" and Stanley Spencer's "Resurrection" also still impart something of the excitement that they roused on their first appearance. They stood for a return to tradition on different lines from the more conventional ones followed by the Royal Academy at the time, and in their independence of spirit were typical of the outlook of its then freshly-founded rival, the New English Art Club, whose other pioneer members, like Steer, Sickert, Pryde and Rothenstein, have also contributed to the Tate some of its finest paintings in the English section. The members of a later association, the London Group, whose adherences range from post-impressionism to surrealism, have in their turn furnished the Gallery with its more recent acquisitions, among which works by Matthew Smith, Wyndham Lewis, Paul Nash and Graham Sutherland are prominent. It should be noted too that the Tate affords a view of contemporary English sculpture by Eric Gill, Jacob Epstein, Frank Dobson, Henry Moore and others.

The Tate Gallery, indeed, performs a unique service among the country's galleries in giving a survey of the English School which, at the same time, includes a liberal selection of contemporary production. But although this portion of its contents demands particular mention for its claims in that respect upon the visitor, it also equals any of the world's galleries for its wealth in modern French painting. There, the Barbizon

group and Corot—above all, the peerless early Corot—have a fine showing, but the splendid array of impressionists and post-impressionists gives this part of the Gallery its real distinction. No artists of prominence in the two movements are missing, and among them Degas, Cézanne and Van Gogh figure generously. Good specimens of the chief cubists are also displayed, while the protean talents of Picasso are to be glimpsed in their various phases. And it may be remarked, as evidence of the Gallery's discerning modernism, that the delicate genius of Paul Klee receives happy inclusion.

We return to the National Gallery in order to have access, through an unobtrusive entrance on its east side, to the National Portrait Gallery. The two institutions are joined as buildings, but independent in administration. The National Portrait Gallery was opened in 1896, its erection having cost £96,000, towards which Mr. W. H. Alexander gave £80,000. Its purpose is to exhibit the portraits of the nation's famous men and women from the past to the present, though with the exception of their appearance in a few official groups they do not figure on the Gallery's walls until after death. Paintings and drawings compose the great majority of this portraiture, although it may include sculpture, and in a single case, that of Mrs. Beeton, the author of the famous cookery-book, it takes the form of a photograph. Apart from those of the earliest date, whose authenticity cannot in all cases be proved, the works admitted must all be genuine likenesses, whose fidelity of record counts, in the circumstances, more than merit in execution. Branwell Brontë's group of his three gifted sisters, for instance, cannot claim to be more than an amateur's production, but from the point of view of the Gallery's function it is an exhibit of great value.

In any case, independently of his interest in the sitters as historical personages, the visitor finds himself embarked on a fascinating tour of the highways and byways of painting. The

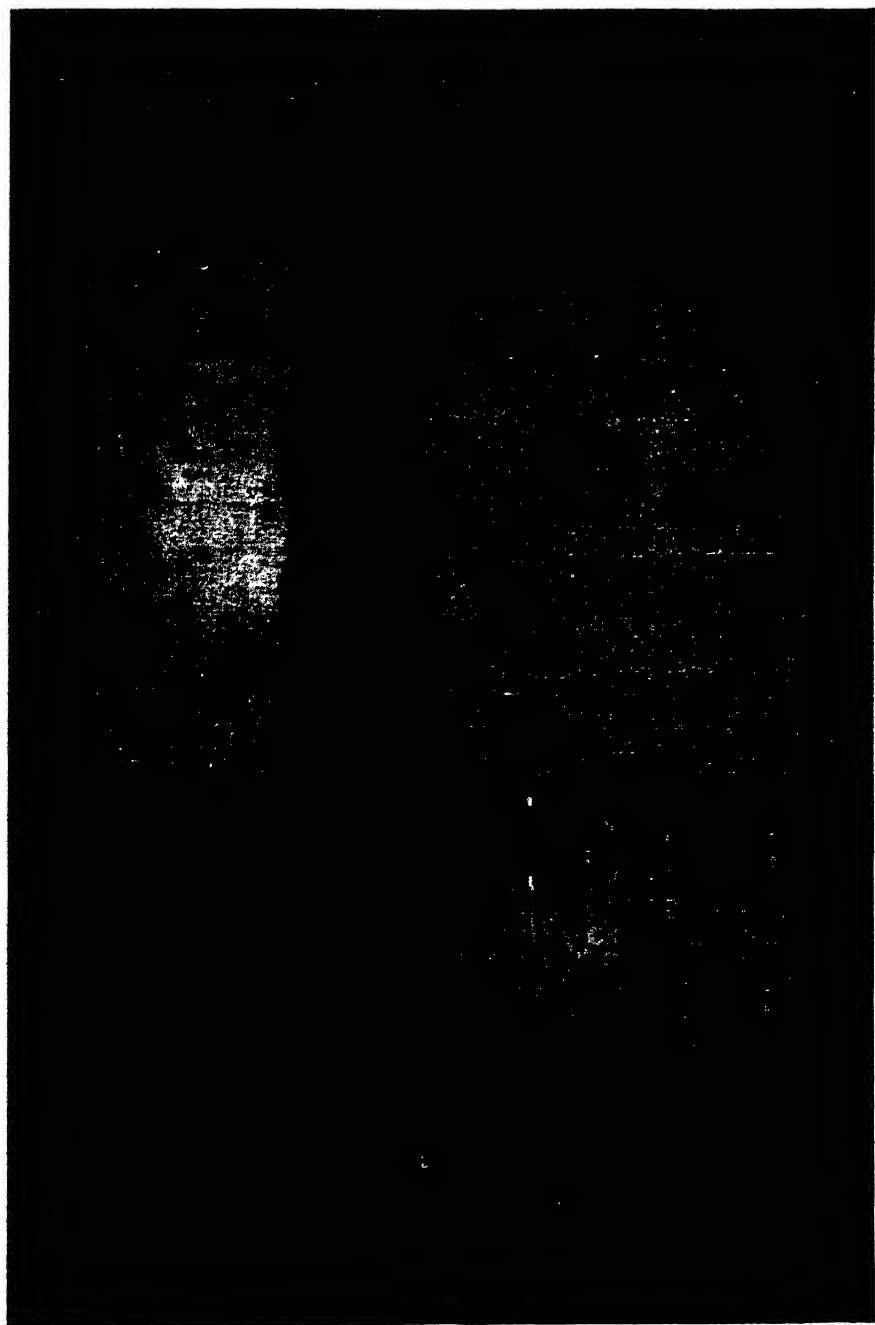
Elizabethan portraits, when they seem poor in artistry, are often remarkable costume-pieces; the scene of Whitefield converting his hearer is at least dramatic; and Charles Reade writing in his conservatory attracts attention by the floridity of its Victorian genre. And there are many things of real excellence, like the anonymous "Sir Thomas Wyatt", or Hazlitt's "Charles Lamb", not to mention the work of accredited masters, like Van Dyck's "Charles I", Reynolds's "Dr. Johnson", and the magnificent series of great Victorians by Watts. The National Portrait Gallery is essentially a browsing-place for the leisurely visitor.

Yet however pressed he may be for time, the Wallace Collection at Hertford House should compel a pause. After the National Gallery, it is London's richest repository of old masters, and indeed, in its examples of the French School of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries it supplements a section of European art in which the National Gallery displays, comparatively speaking, a certain weakness. The Collection has also the interest of being in its composition the reflection of personal taste, instead of an assembly, dictated largely by chance, of museum acquisitions. Its nucleus was gathered together by the first three Marquesses of Hertford, of whom the third was the model for the Marquess of Steyne in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*. The bulk of its contents, however, were the purchases of the fourth Marquess. They include twelve Rembrandts and nine Watteaus—two masters curiously united in their purchaser's statement that he only liked "pleasing pictures". Further additions were made by his natural son and heir, Sir Richard Wallace, whose widow bequeathed the collection to the nation, on condition that it should be suitably housed; as its actual house seemed most appropriate for the purpose, Hertford House was bought and adapted to the requirements of public exhibition in 1900 at a cost of £100,000.

In the diversity of its exhibits, which include furniture,

porcelain, a notable collection of armour, clocks of all periods, and much exquisite bric-à-brac, the mansion resembles a miniature Louvre, the more so since its first importance is as a picture-gallery. With Franz Hals's "Laughing Cavalier" it contains one of the world's most famous portraits, closely rivalled by those of Jean Pellicorne and his wife and son by Rembrandt, and Velasquez's "Woman with a Fan". Andrea del Sarto's "Virgin and Child with St. John the Baptist and Two Angels" is perhaps the finest of the Collection's early Italian masters; of the later ones, Canaletto and Guardi are superbly represented, while for the art of eighteenth-century France, nowhere outside that country can the Wallace Collection's examples of Watteau, Fragonard, Boucher and Greuze be equalled. Bonington, claimed by both French and English Schools, was another favourite of the fourth Marquess, who enriched the Collection with thirty-six of his works. Sir Richard Wallace brought the French section up to date for his day by adding to it Rousseau's "Glade in the Forest of Fontainebleau" and Corot's "Macbeth and the Witches", not to mention a set of little costume-pieces by Meissonier, whose work commanded fantastically high prices by the square inch during his lifetime, but is now an outstanding instance of the deflation in fame and price that can befall an artistic vogue. In the Collection's English section, among many masterpieces, it is of interest to seek out the three portraits of Mrs. "Perdita" Robinson by Gainsborough, Romney and Reynolds, though the latter is perhaps more successful with his vivacious "Nelly O'Brien". And for the grand style in English portraiture, Lawrence's "Mrs. Siddons" is magnificent.

The princely array of treasure at Hertford House throws into the shade the contents of the Soane Museum in its apt eighteenth-century setting of Lincoln's Inn Fields, which, however, also has the attraction of embodying a personal taste. It was originally the house and private collection of Sir John



*'Old Battersea Bridge'. Oil painting by James McNeill Whistler in the Tate Gallery*





*'Harlequin and Columbine'. Oil painting by Antoine Watteau in the Wallace Collection*

Soane, the architect of the Bank of England, who left them to the nation along with his architectural library. It is a curiously miscellaneous agglomeration, in which archaeological relics from Egypt and the East predominate, and whose most important piece is the sarcophagus of Seti I; yet on account of its pictures alone it would demand a visit. For besides works by Canaletto, Watteau, Reynolds and Turner, it possesses two of the best sets of Hogarth's serial paintings, "The Election" and "The Rake's Progress". In these splendid sequences, humour and great art unite, while English social life of their period is revealed with a vividness that no historian could hope to attain.

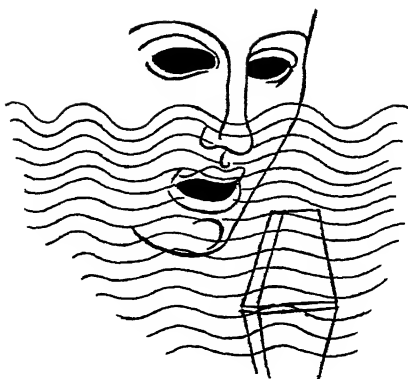
It is a single aspect of English life that is portrayed at the National Gallery of British Sports and Pastimes, the latest of London's public art galleries in foundation. It is contained in Hutchinson House, late Derby House, which, with its contents, was given to the nation by Mr. Walter Hutchinson in 1949. Devoted in the first place to the purpose of graphic record, the Gallery, like the National Portrait Gallery, yet holds many attractions for the visitor who enters it for the sake of art rather than sport. Constable's "Stratford Mill", may conceivably illustrate the pleasures of angling, but it is at the same time one of the greatest landscapes of the English School; the graphic annals of the racecourse gain admittance to the Gallery's walls with masterpieces of horse-painting from Stubbs and Marshall to Munnings. And a sporting incident in the course of the picture accounts for the welcome presence of many delightful eighteenth-century conversation-pieces.

A more varied, if somewhat haphazard, survey of English art is provided by the Diploma Gallery shortly to be reopened at Burlington House, the home of the Royal Academy, composed of a choice of works furnished by each Academician on his election. But perhaps of greater interest are the set of Constable sketches, while the Gallery also contains a large and beautiful

drawing by Leonardo, "The Holy Family", and a bas-relief by Michelangelo.

Constable, in both sketches and finished work, is again to be found at the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington, which houses several bequests of paintings in its architectural intricacy. Among them are a good series of the Early English water-colour painters, and works of such contrasting merit as Rossetti's portrait of Mrs. Morris and Degas's "Robert le Diable". For water-colours, prints and drawings, however, the chief national repository is the British Museum, which exhibits a selection, periodically changed, of its treasures in the Print Room, and whose stock in portfolio may be consulted on application.

London's remaining public gallery, the Guildhall, awaits the re-establishment of its permanent exhibits, chiefly the works of Victorian painters who have now passed the apogee of their fame but are still of lively interest to students of the history of taste. And it should be noted that, as a supplement to the national collections, the number of galleries in London concerned with art in its commercial aspect is rapidly increasing. They are to be found mainly in the neighbourhood of Bond Street, and their establishment responds to an interest in art which has greatly quickened in recent years, and which London may claim to satisfy with generous abundance.



*Patric Dickinson*

THE B.B.C.

*Drawings by John Pemberton*

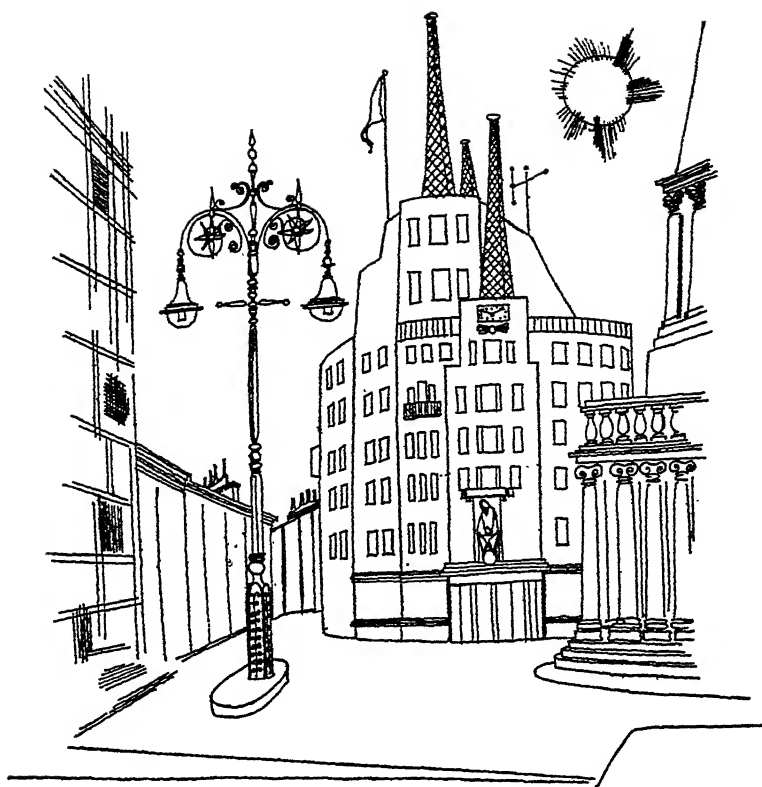
Quite recently a tenant came up before a rent tribunal complaining that his landlord would not allow him to have a wireless set; and he was appealing for a considerable rent reduction—almost 75 per cent as it happened. The magistrate allowed the appeal and declared that a wireless set must now be considered as an integral, indeed essential, part of “family life”. The horrors which this attitude opens up are for the sociologist, however, and not for us. The reader will notice my conservative insistence on the words “wireless set”—en français la T.S.F., télégraphie sans fil—for the English have not yet decided wholeheartedly in favour of the American word “radio”, and still speak of “the nine o’clock news” and not a “newscast”.

England is a small place, and broadcasting covers our islands single-handed; that is, without nation-wide hook-ups,

networks, and so forth. In fact broadcasting is a monopoly, but it is not a monopoly such as the state broadcasting of Eastern Europe or Russia. The British Broadcasting Corporation is a semi-free and semi-independent body, not unlike a distinguished French prisoner on parole in England during the Napoleonic wars; and like Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's famous character, Brigadier Gérard, has to be excessively careful not to offend any section of native prejudice—an impossible task.

The British Broadcasting Company was formed by the manufacturers of wireless sets in 1922. In those days wireless was really exciting; there were endless knobs to twiddle, coils to adjust, and such was the novelty that women invented a hairstyle of plaits curled over their ears to simulate headphones. In those days there were even more wires than there are now; and a great deal more silence than sound. The B.B.C. made its profits from the sale of wireless sets—from crystal sets with cat's whiskers (and if you lived near the transmitting station a piece of coal would do instead of a crystal) to enormous Wellsian contraptions which "could just get America". But the Company was only allowed to broadcast at all under licence from the Postmaster-General, who in England is the supreme authority in the matter of wireless telegraphy. Owners of wireless sets also had to buy a Post Office licence to operate them. This state of affairs still obtains, though modifications have taken place.

In 1926 the Crawford Committee, appointed by Parliament to enquire into the infant's growing pains—from 35,000 licences to over a million in four years—recommended that from being a private company the B.B.C. should become a public corporation. As this was twenty years before nationalisation became an international cause for dissension and quarrelling, nobody objected when the British Broadcasting Corporation was created by Royal Charter in 1927, with Governors to be appointed by the King in Council, and a chief



executive called Director-General. This revolution had the desired English effect of turning the first General Manager of the Company into the first Director-General of the Corporation which drew its revenue from licences still, but also from a Treasury grant, instead of the sale of wireless sets. Sir John Reith, now Lord Reith, can truly be said to have created our system of broadcasting, to have deeply influenced its morality and style and to have attracted to it those young university men many of whom now sway the fortunes of the vast organisation it has become. In those days announcers "dressed" for the evening news and that sense of high moral purpose was instilled

which has made British Broadcasting for good and ill unique in the world.

For, unlike many other countries, England has never had "commercial broadcasting". It is impossible for private firms to advertise their wares at the microphone; or to buy space on the air and relay entertainment which the Americans, with their passion for hygiene, euphemistically call "soap operas", though they are not always cleansing. This has been of incalculable importance in the development of English broadcasting. For example, it has enabled the public over a long period to hear enough good classical music really to improve its musical tastes. Sir John Reith, being a Scot, had a serious approach to education and saw very clearly the dangers of a purely, and of an impurely, frivolous attitude to this great new medium of expression. Thanks to him the B.B.C. has always mingled education and entertainment, and always with an eye, or ear, to improving the standards of both.

Over the door of Broadcasting House, which rides like a great ship at anchor in Portland Place, is the figure of Prospero with his hand upon the shoulders of Ariel. Prospero the magician who could fill the isle with noises and bewilder poor Caliban, the imperfect earthbound listener; Ariel who boasted,

"I drink the air before me, and return  
Or e'er your pulse beat twice."

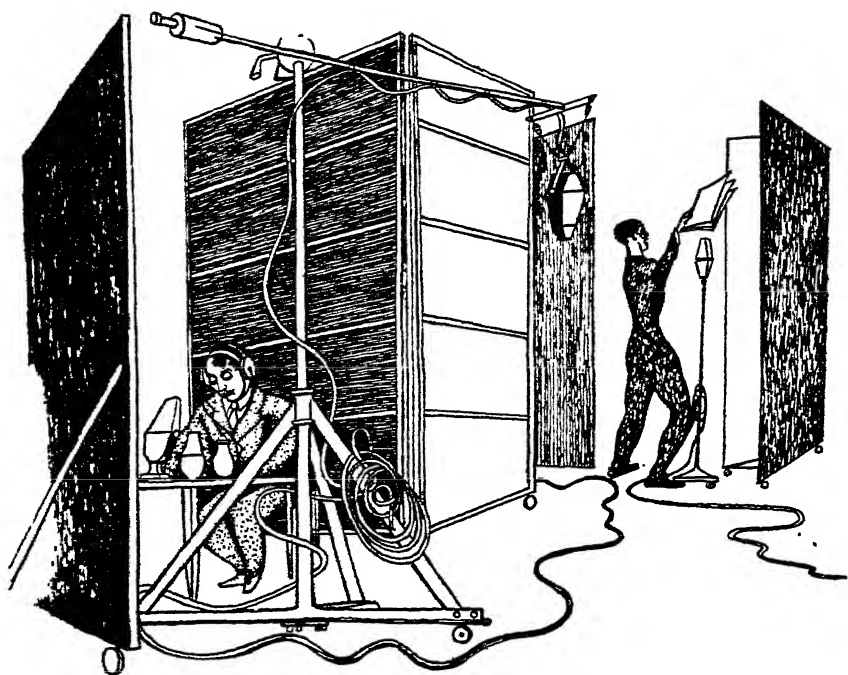
(Short-wave broadcasting can girdle the earth in one-fifth of a second, bouncing off the 70-mile-high Heaviside layer at intervals as it does.) These two wonderful creations of the mature genius of William Shakespeare are not unfitting symbols of our broadcasting endeavour. The figures were commissioned by the B.B.C. and executed by the sculptor Eric Gill. Lord Reith is no longer Director-General but the foundation of the Reith Lectures in 1949 has brought to the microphone the great philosopher Bertrand Russell to give a

series of profound discourses on the subject of "Authority and the Individual", making every home a potential university lecture-room. This is an Athenian standard!

The problem of "Authority and the Individual" is one intimately connected with broadcasting. Without its help, could Hitler have mesmerised the mass of the German people? Wireless is a terrible political weapon. But the B.B.C. being a public corporation is politically impartial: speech on the English air is still free. Equal time is allotted to each political party and in that time, in the "Party Political Broadcasts", each party has liberty to choose its own speakers and to develop its own policy. It is extremely important to realise that though the B.B.C. is under licence from the Postmaster-General who is, of course, a member of the Government in power, it is still an independent body, with no views of its own, but existing to give vent to every reasonable shade of public opinion. It therefore exists with a permanent, though shifting, thorn of grievance pricking its Director-General.

But the worth of its objective impartiality of policy was proved in the 1939 war. Naturally a security censorship was imposed, but within these limits the B.B.C., in its propaganda services to Europe, still pursued the lonely way of honesty and truth. It was a slow and often disappointing way in face of the brilliant and serpentine subversions of Dr. Goebbels, but even in wartime when this great new medium for the dissemination of truth proved to be the opposite, still the truth made its way. In all the occupied countries of Europe the news from England and the secret wireless set upon which to hear it became rallying-points of resistance, of belief and therefore of hope. The calm and dispassionate voices from London overcame the jamming and hysterics from Berlin—and did far more than that. During the war the B.B.C. expanded in a staggering manner—there was almost no language spoken in the world, in which news, talks, and entertainment were not broadcast, often





under conditions of considerable stress. And perhaps more than anything for the people of England as well as of Europe the broadcast chimes of Big Ben, which never failed to usher in the nine o'clock news, were a tremendous source of reassurance and confidence.

At the end of the war the B.B.C. found a country made, of necessity, very wireless-conscious. And it set about reorganising its peacetime services. There is the Home Service with its general programme of news, talks, plays, features, concerts, variety shows, outside broadcasts of sporting events, etc. This programme functions from 6.30 a.m. to 11.15 p.m. It is relayed also on various wavelengths by Regional stations—West, Midland, North, Scottish and Northern Ireland—which use it



as the basis of their daily broadcasting, but substitute whatever programmes of local regional interest they may choose, instead of the Home programme. In this way the listener, wherever he is, has the choice of two programmes, Home or Regional. But he has more: for there is also the Light Programme with broadcasts from 9 a.m. to midnight. As its name implies, it provides a greater proportion of dance music, music hall, sporting and variety material than does the Home Service. For example, *Dick Barton* whose hair-raising serial adventures have taken the place of the old silent film thrillers, curdles the blood of the Light listener; as *The Week in Westminster*, a political commentary, curdles the Home. But our greatest radio comedian, Tommy Handley, whose death was mourned by the

whole nation, presented *ITMA* (It's That Man Again) on the Home Service. Taken together the two programmes dovetail excellently. *Saturday Night Theatre* has brought the drama literally home to millions of people who have no theatre in their vicinity and its breadth of taste varies from Shakespeare to Terence Rattigan.

Thanks to the particular organisation of the B.B.C., broadcasting has remained a free educative force, its service to schools being a model of non-partisan scholastic endeavour.

As every foreigner who has ever visited England knows, we tend to talk about the weather, and in country towns and villages there always used to be at least one weatherwise yokel who could eye the clouds, wet his finger in the wind, and pronounce wisdom. Ask him now, he will still look wise and then say "Ah, it's going to rain—said so on the wireless".

The English sense of humour is another ancient trap to the visitor. Listen now in trains, buses, shops, queues, and public houses and you will hear a strange argot of allusions, and bursts of laughter at phrases which seem quite meaningless. These, it will be discovered, are catchwords and phrases from our favourite comic programmes such as *Much-Binding-in-the-Marsh*, or of course *ITMA*.

But not being content to rest on its Home and Light laurels the B.B.C. inaugurated in 1946 a programme which it called simply *The Third Programme*. This programme, which is unique, has presented music, opera, drama and poetry of a standard of performance one may call truly international, and it has been prepared to go anywhere in Europe, or elsewhere, to seek its material. Opera from La Scala, Milan, concerts from Paris by the Orchestre Colonne, or by the Concertgebouw from Amsterdam—it has brought to the microphone great artists such as Schnabel, and, particularly in music, has not confined itself to the stereotyped classical repertory but has experimented widely in lesser known works. It has also commissioned works

by leading contemporary composers, dramatists and poets. Unlike the other two programmes, it has no news bulletins or regular programme times. Each day the programme is built round one or two central items, a full performance of Verdi's *Otello* perhaps, and though the programmes are timed, no



programme is cut to fulfil the ruthless split-second timing of the Home and Light—if a symphony over-runs by ten minutes it is allowed to do so. This great project owes its success largely to its music, and to the energy of its first planner, Etienne Amyot, himself a concert pianist of international standing.

Unfortunately the congestion on the medium wave-band makes the transmission and reception of the Third Programme extremely imperfect—a state of affairs much to be deplored, for it is the boldest and most artistic use of broadcasting yet conceived. But it serves as yet another example of creative artists and producers being frustrated by failures of administration—failures not unknown in other spheres of public life.

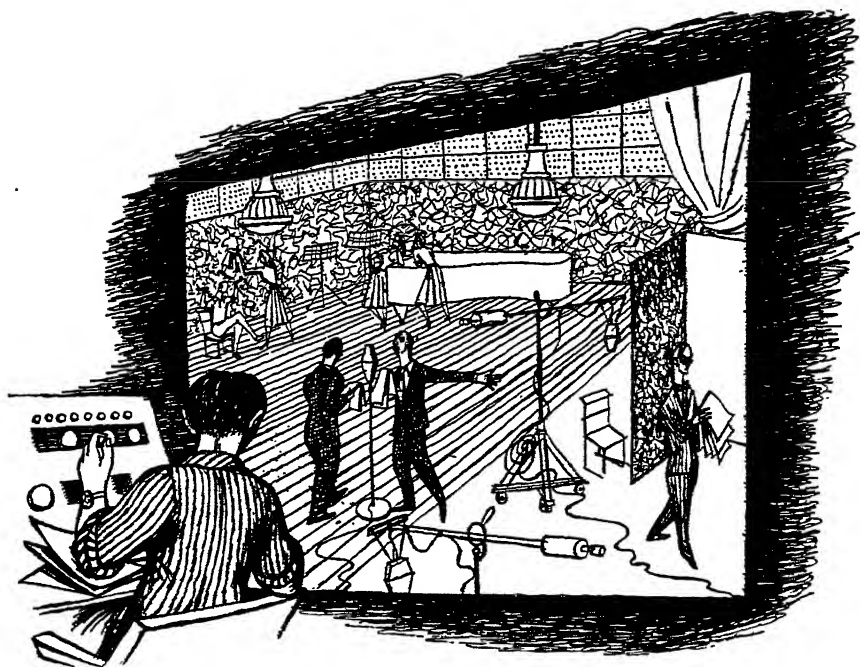
A lively and experimental television service, whose presentation of plays is particularly stimulating—a recent performance of *King Lear*, for example, being considered by many critics to be superior to the finest recent productions in the theatre—completes the, so to speak, insular activities of the B.B.C.

As an admirable adjunct to the home services, the B.B.C. publishes every Thursday a weekly periodical called *The Listener*, which reprints the best of the week's talks, so that one can re-read and study at leisure a lecture by Bertrand Russell for example. *The Listener* also has a critical section in which independent critics discuss the week's drama, features, talks, and music. The *Radio Times*, with a circulation of millions, gives full details of each week's programmes. It is published every Friday for the week beginning the following Sunday.

The intensive nature of broadcasting makes it almost impossible for the visitor to see round Broadcasting House—unless he is lucky enough to have inside influence! Very few broadcasts are given before audiences, and for these the B.B.C. gets about a 700 per cent over-demand for tickets.

But since the Corporation still maintains a vast network of overseas services it is most likely that you can find someone in the service which broadcasts to your particular country to "show you round".

However, being shown round a studio or being in the control room during a broadcast is not a very exciting experience after the first novelty has worn off. Looking through the glass into the studio; seeing actors in shirt sleeves, with pages of script in their hands, standing before the microphone, or, having said their pieces, returning gingerly, in case of noise, to their chairs round the wall; seeing an efficient girl crumpling a piece of cellophane to simulate, as it does, the terrible fire in the building in which Dick Barton is trapped; you are conscious only of the magical deception of broadcasting and the reasons for adopting Prospero as its symbolic patron.

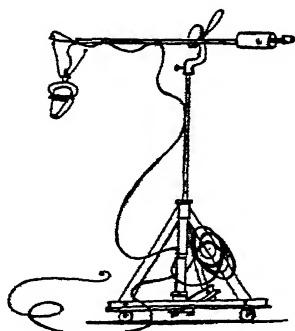


The fact is that broadcasting is still being planned by men who believe that, on the whole, the public intends to or must be persuaded to listen seriously. The amount of narcotic "background listening" is not excessive—even on the Light Programme where the tastes are pandered to of those who leave their machines "on" only for companionable noise. Perhaps the most valid complaint against the B.B.C. is that there is not enough blessed silence: Caliban is never given a moment's peace.

Broadcasting in England has been going only just over twenty-five years and if I were asked to choose its most "English" feature I would turn to Christmas Day. After lunch a vast percentage of the population "switches on" to hear, without an inkling of the difficulties, the linking together of the British Commonwealth by voice after voice until at three o'clock—introduced by

one of his subjects—the King speaks. And we suddenly realise that our distance from him is only the distance of his mouth from the microphone and our own ears from our loudspeakers. It is an intimate and fruitful occasion.

For real broadcasting is the annihilation of distance without the annihilation of personality; the achievement of intimacy by mechanical means, without loss of human dignity. As witness the great wartime broadcasting of Mr. Winston Churchill, and President Roosevelt's fireside talks. The B.B.C.'s present charter, which must be renewed from time to time, expires in 1951 and it is certain that the advocates of commercial broadcasting will make a great endeavour to break the monopoly of the B.B.C. The broadcasting systems of America where it is almost entirely commercial, and of Australia which has both state and commercial services, and of other countries, are certain to be used as arguments; but the variety of choice, the impartiality, and the standard of entertainment which the B.B.C. offers its licence-holders for £1 a year, make it likely that the system of broadcasting in England will continue to be that excellent compromise of a state-aided independent body, which it now is.



THE CONTEMPORARY THEATRE

When, as a young playgoer ripe for any adventure, I used to come up to London from the provinces—from a Western town where the cinema was beginning to elbow out the legitimate stage—I had as a talisman a crumpled map of the West End with its theatres marked in a fiery red. (The colour would have pleased my Puritan ancestors, who thought of the theatre in the words an old man addressed to my mother in a Cornish village: "They pompin' folk must lie 'long wi' the deadly worm, a-wrugglin' an' a-wrugglin' in the dust.") On the map the theatres lay so closely together that the page looked like an archery target with many arrows clustered about the central gold. That, I think, is Leicester Square, though today it is the core of the West End cinemas rather than of the stage: three of the Leicester Square houses marked on my 1926 map have vanished, as well as certain others in the area of the West End. Even so, as you strike out north, south, east and west from Leicester Square, you can still cover—within about half a mile in each direction—the whole West End stage: that Inner Circle honoured by manager, dramatist, actor and producer, and the centre of playgoing in Britain.

To the north-west of Leicester Square you come upon the roar and flourish of Shaftesbury Avenue, not maybe an æsthetically exciting street, but one whose name has developed into a kind of shorthand for the London theatre. Towards the Piccadilly Circus end of its northern pavement three important theatres—the Apollo, the Lyric, and the Globe—are close together (in pre-war years there were four of them, but the Queen's was badly blitzed), and it is only a minute's walk to six or seven others, one of which, the Windmill Theatre, a tiny



vaudeville house, had the distinction of remaining open throughout the war's heaviest raids.

If you go from Leicester Square along Charing Cross Road, you are within hail of half a dozen other theatres, both there and in St. Martin's Lane: the Hippodrome, Wyndham's, the Garrick, the New, the Duke of York's, the Coliseum. Soon you come to the western end of the Strand. This endearing street, sadly mixed architecturally, but still an epitome of inner-metropolitan life—a bridge between City and West End proper—contains three theatres, the Adelphi, the Vaudeville, and the Savoy, with four or five more near by, including the famous Drury Lane forever associated with those great names of the British theatre, Garrick, John Kemble and his sister Mrs. Siddons, Edmund Kean and Macready; Doctor Johnson wrote the prologue to mark the beginning of Garrick's management in 1747; Sheridan succeeded to the management, and Byron wrote the prologue for the opening of the present building in 1812. There have been in fact four theatres on this site between 1663 and the present day—three centuries of continuous theatrical tradition. The Stoll in Kingsway, once an opera house, later a cinema, recently the home of ice revue (most things look different on skates), is now your outer limit. If you return from it to Leicester Square as the crow flies, or the playgoer walks, you will penetrate a region flecked on my old map with red labels that cluster more thickly as you approach Charing Cross Road again.

In the south-west corner of the map, below Piccadilly Circus, stands the little group of theatres, with two celebrated in stage record, the Haymarket and His Majesty's—around the busy street that bears its rural name of Haymarket still. The St. James's is an outlier. Finally, if you remember the schoolboy's definition of a sheep as "an animal with four legs, one at each corner", you can establish the four corner-legs of your theatre-map as the Palladium in the far north-west, the Victoria Palace



*George Bernard Shaw. Oil painting by Augustus John, 1922*



*Dame Edith Evans. Pencil drawing by Wyndham Lewis, 1932*

in the south-west, the Playhouse close to the Victoria Embankment in the south-east, and, up in the north-east, the Stoll. Here, within approximately a square mile, is everything: the heart of the British theatre.

Within this square mile lie the principal commercial theatres, the leading musical-comedy theatres, the major music halls. But the British National Theatre, when it comes, will be outside this area. At present, it must be explained, London has to do without one. It has always done without one, though now the hour approaches to fill the gap. A site has been chosen, on the south bank of the Thames—not far from the site of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre—and Parliament is actively concerning itself with plans, though actual building has yet to begin and for the moment the area is covered still by doomed wharves and warehouses. For the experimental theatres, too, you must turn away from Leicester Square, Piccadilly Circus and Shaftesbury Avenue, and take bus or underground train to the suburbs: north to the enterprising Left Wing theatre, the Unity, at King's Cross; north-west again to the Embassy in its quiet road at Swiss Cottage on the Hampstead slope, west to the Q near Kew Bridge, or, in a closer ring, to such little theatres of increasing fame as the Mercury (a stage for poetic drama in a harsh world), the New Lindsey, and the Boltons, all in the inner suburbs of Bayswater and Kensington. And outside London again is the country-wide network of the British repertory movement. The repertory theatres of Birmingham (founded by a great man of the stage, Sir Barry Jackson) and of Liverpool have long led the way; and in recent years they have been joined among others by the western theatre of the Old Vic at Bristol. All over the country the repertory companies are "nurseries" of growing theatrical achievement. London will always owe much to the provincial stage and its enthusiasms.

Even so the heart of the normal playgoer's theme must be the West End. It is the British theatre in microcosm, and whether

you like what you find or disapprove of it must depend entirely upon your personal taste in playgoing. There is usually a play to fit everyone, though in these days you cannot often go to a given theatre—as one did at the beginning of the century and even, to a lesser degree, in the 'twenties—in the certainty that you will find a given type of piece. Let me explain. Half a century ago the playgoer would have found drawing-room drama at Sir George Alexander's St. James's Theatre, spectacular melodrama on the vast stage of Drury Lane, drawing-room comedy at the little Criterion, musical comedy at Daly's, classical drama at the Lyceum, and so through the list. Every stage would flower in its own fashion. Today you can rarely count on finding regularly in one theatre any one thing. Thus, as I write, Drury Lane is staging a pearl among American musical comedies, the St. James's a French farce, the Aldwych (once renowned for straws-in-the-hair farce, British pattern) a straight drama, His Majesty's a revue.

The theatre buildings themselves vary a great deal. Some are handsome in the modern manner, some favour the pleasant old plush-and-gilt style with chubby gold Cupids and a mirrored glitter, some are vast, opulent, broad-acred, others hole-in-the-corner. Each to his choice. I think at once of the rose-pink splendours of Covent Garden; the tiered boxes and wide spaces of Drury Lane; the severe dignity of the middle-sized St. James's; the handsome, curving intimacy of the Haymarket; the charming underground bandbox of the Criterion; the long, wide rake of the Coliseum; the chaste modern interior of the small Duchess; the polychromatic stalls of the underground Savoy; the drawing-room Ambassadors; the highly-polished Whitehall; the icy marble of the Scala; the comfortable pomp of the Playhouse; the quart-in-pint of the Fortune; the oval plaques of the Lyric; the cheerful dinginess of the Duke of York's; the great well of the Prince's. Each theatre has its own character, its own personal attributes. You will soon come to

remember which theatres have a central gangway and which have not; which door leads to the Apollo and which to its twin, the Lyric; in which blessed spots—the Playhouse ground floor is one of them—there is no need to rise when newcomers enter your row; in which other houses (the New and St. Martin's, for example) the dress circle is more or less on street level; where, as at the Winter Garden, you have some leagues to walk to get to the front of the stalls, or where the pit is cramped in a few back rows and the gallery is on a dizzying eagle's perch.

The "little" and experimental theatres of the suburbs have other peculiarities. When you go to the Q at Kew Bridge you seek a converted drill-hall; other tiny theatres are in old church halls, basements, top-storeys. The Mercury, a former church hall in Notting Hill, has done much for the poetic drama, thanks to the faith and judgment of its owner, the dramatist and critic Ashley Dukes. The New Lindsey is a large room that seats a hundred and sixty-two people; the Boltons in Kensington, on the Chelsea fringe, shares with the near-West-End Westminster (and the Players' Theatre Club at Charing Cross) the distinction of being one of the few theatres to have been converted from a cinema. The Torch, up a winding stair off Knightsbridge, has been likened to the top of a bus, though not many bus passengers are treated to *Rosmersholm* and other comparable productions. Up in Swiss Cottage is the Embassy with its midnight-blue ceiling. Down at Hammersmith is the gold-framed stage of the Lyric (not to be confused with the Shaftesbury Avenue Lyric), the little house, approached through a street market, that the late Sir Nigel Playfair, first with Drinkwater's *Abraham Lincoln*, later by his revival of a classic piece, Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, transformed thirty years ago into one of the most fashionable theatres of its time.

I have said that London has not a national theatre. But it has an equivalent in the Old Vic company which nowadays is to be found usually for some eight months of the year at the

New Theatre in St. Martin's Lane. (During the summer you can go pleasantly in search of Shakespeare on the turf of the Open Air Theatre at Regent's Park or, on a wet day, under canvas: the moving spirit is Robert Atkins, himself once an Old Vic man of distinction.) The Vic takes its name from a famous old house in the Waterloo Road, over Waterloo Bridge and half a mile or so down on the southern bank of the Thames. There the late Lilian Baylis, starting with a policy of Shakespeare and opera-in-English for working-class audiences, realised that she had laid firmly the basis of a national theatre. The Vic was damaged during the war and now holds a school of acting; in recent years its company has come across to the West End—to the regret, almost dismay, of some of its staunchest supporters. At its best the Vic has given to us the magnificent classical performances—the best in our day—of Sir Laurence Olivier, who has a passion, a compelling fire, met seldom on the modern stage; of Sir Ralph Richardson, a player of powerful sincerity and fibre; of Dame Edith Evans, a character actress of genius; and of Dame Sybil Thorndike, a major tragedienne who can willingly unbend to flutter-comedy. Olivier's pantherine Richard the Third and his majestic Œdipus, Richardson's Peer Gynt and Falstaff, Dame Edith's Lady Wishfort and Madame Ranevsky, and Dame Sybil's Aase and Queen Margaret are all memories that must glow in stage record. The Vic also developed the talents of Alec Guinness, a young actor who—like certain others of his day, William Devlin and Peter Ustinov—has an uncanny flair for the interpretation of age. The Vic productions have been unequal. A mediocre season may press hard upon an exciting one. Yet it is obvious that playgoers who frequent the New have by far the best chance to see what a British company can do with Shakespeare, Sheridan, Congreve, Chekhov, or other dramatists of the classical repertory.

Another British actor of eminence who won his first classic bays at the Old Vic, but who now walks alone, is John Gielgud:

if he is playing in London his performances should not be missed. Gielgud, generally regarded as our leading Hamlet, is made for any highly-strung part of exceptionally nervous sensibility. Unlike Olivier and Richardson he acts very rarely for the cinema: there at least he has a counterpart in Donald Wolfit, another Vic-trained classic actor. Wolfit's exact position in the theatre is arguable: he has great drive and enthusiasm: he has tackled all manner of parts between Lear and Bottom, between Touchstone and Ibsen's Master Builder, and often he has roused an audience by sheer "attack", a quality not to be despised. But many feel that his most important work is his steady Shakespeare-touring through the provinces. Sir Frank Benson led the way here: Wolfit has followed manfully. As an actor he can bring off a surprise—I remember his Iachimo in *Cymbeline*—and he is worth seeing if he should be on view in one of his frequent London appearances.

There are many other actors of skill: Michael Redgrave who, like Gielgud, is at his best in the complexities of some neurosis; the elder statesman, Godfrey Tearle; Robert Donat, Eric Portman, Leslie Banks, Alec Clunes, Miles Malleon, Robert Eddison, Leon Quartermaine, John Clements, Bernard Miles, Cecil Trouncer, Robert Harris, Esmé Percy, Ernest Milton and the young Paul Scofield. The West End theatre, ever distinguished for its comedy, can offer a number of excellent drolls. In light comedy, with a brilliant burnish and assurance of style, we have two such masters as the veteran A. E. Matthews and the younger Ronald Squire; not to speak of the versatile Francis Lister, and an equally versatile Scot, Alastair Sim, with the ringdove voice and the burning eyes. Farce has a whole team: for example Robertson Hare, that personification of suburban respectability, with his shining dome and gleaming spectacles, whose fate it is to be hounded through any three-act frisk written for him usually by Ben Travers or Vernon Sylvaine; Ralph Lynn, of the weaving gestures, the



monocle, and the much-gnawed knuckles; and the galvanic Sonnie Hale, whose eye-work never tires. Revue and variety can present the ingratiating Sid Field, most original comedian "discovered" in the last decade, a man who can speak in accents yet unknown and crumple his face into a thousand likenesses. Then there are Leslie Henson, an odd combination of wagtail, goldfish, and wise old owl; the boisterous comic adventurers of the Crazy Gang, Bud Flanagan, Nervo and Knox, Naughton and Gold; Tommy Trinder, most assured of vaudeville comedians; and—one of the new Old Masters of clowning—Eddie Gray, who calls himself "Monsewer" because he speaks for preference in the French of Stratford-atte-Bowe. His appearance as a melancholy juggler with handle-bar moustaches, owl-spectacles, silk hat and plus-fours, never fails to convulse an audience.

All of these are visible normally in or around the West End. London, maybe, is less rich in its actresses. Many of the younger ones are very much alike, usually competent but not especially distinguished. Even so, it is possible here to choose such skilled players as Beatrix Lehmann, Flora Robson, Sonia Dresdel, Peggy Ashcroft, Celia Johnson, Ena Burrill, Joyce Redman, Gertrude Lawrence, Angela Baddeley and Vivien Leigh, with such finely accomplished figures of an older school as Mary Jerrold, Dame Irene Vanbrugh, and Marie Löhr. Fay Compton, an actress of rare technique, is adept in so many different parts in so many different types of piece that playgoers may be inclined to under-estimate her. The specialist, in the theatre as elsewhere, is always likely to make more of a mark upon the crowd. Among younger players still to gain fullest recognition in the West End are Pauline Letts, Jessica Spencer, Pauline Jameson and Valerie White. Finally, in comedy we have Cicely Courtneidge and the Anglo-French Yvonne Arnaud; in farce, Margaret Rutherford; and in revue, Binnie Hale and the two Hermiones, the exuberant Hermione Baddeley and the mordant

Queen Wasp that is Hermione Gingold. The acknowledged head of the British vaudeville stage is Gracie Fields, a Lancashire mill-girl who went out from Rochdale to conquer the world.

The players, then, are ready. On the whole the level of acting is high, though there is still a tendency to under-act—often bred of film experience—and to “throw away” vital speeches. This was notable particularly between the wars; lately we are observing a welcome change. Foreign visitors may remark on one thing; an absence of any settled acting tradition comparable, say, with that of the French stage government by the Comédie Française. The West End is, as it has always been, the theatre of the individualist.

Much, naturally, depends upon the playwrights. At present, though many hands are at work in the theatre (we take, perhaps, too many ready-made importations from America), a few experienced writers have no difficulty in keeping first place. At the head and front is Bernard Shaw. As a rule one or another of his plays is in revival somewhere in London; no one has excelled him as a stage debater, the keenest intellect of our day, the question-master of the theatrical Brains Trust who answers all the questions himself. Somerset Maugham's plays, well-groomed and impeccable technically, are usually there or thereabouts, even if they must be revivals only, as Maugham has written no new work for the theatre since 1933. Here, when we speak of revivals, it is well to notice the growth of interest during the last decade in Restoration comedy: Congreve, Wycherley, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar have all ridden on the tide of fashion. This delight in verbal wit—matched by elaborate scenic decoration—has brought also several revivals of Oscar Wilde comedy from the eightennineties. *The Importance of Being Earnest* is, of course, a treasure of the English stage; but Wilde's other plays owe everything to a dazzle of epigram that blinds us to the tedious melodramatic manœuvring.

Of the younger or middle-period playwrights, Noel Coward is now doing little apart from an occasional morse-code comedy: his melodrama, *Peace in Our Time*, was only mildly successful. J. B. Priestley is heard more often than anyone. He is prolific, adaptable, unashamedly dogmatic, and not afraid of the Theatre of Ideas. James Bridie, the Scottish author of *Mr. Bolfry*, is an inventive, capricious writer, also laden with ideas, who can usually start a play with a packed first act, but who frequently falters in the third through lack of interest in dramatic construction. Emlyn Williams, the Welsh actor-dramatist, on the other hand, rests heavily on plots—packing them into nest upon nest of Chinese boxes—though, as in his semi-autobiographical *The Corn is Green*, he can sometimes illuminate the stage with a rare tenderness. So to Ireland (Shaw is now English-by-adoption) and to Sean O'Casey, probably next to G.B.S. the greatest dramatist of our day: certainly the only one who has written, like the Elizabethans, in a heightened poetic speech with the full Elizabethan mingling of comedy and tragedy. His early plays, *Juno and The Paycock* and *The Plough and the Stars*, from the Irish "troubles", are still unexampled in their kind; and, though opinions differ about it, his more recent realistic-symbolic *Red Roses For Me* has uncommon quality. Denis Johnston, another contemporary Irishman, established his name with the tragi-comedy of *The Moon in the Yellow River*, lit by the moonshine that silvers only the Irish stage. This is a study of fanaticism and "playboyism" in the West of Ireland with one affrighting theatrical stroke and a good deal of glorious absurdity.

Shaw and O'Casey are likely to be remembered as long as any dramatists of our time; but though you will not have far to look for a Shavian revival you will be lucky if you catch one of O'Casey's plays in West End performance.

The London stage offers many popular prose dramatists, some better than others: we can name Patrick Hamilton—who



*John Gielgud and Jessica Tandy in 'Hamlet'. Oil painting by W. R. Sickert, 1935*



*Laurence Olivier as Oedipus. Pencil drawing by Feliks Topolski, 1945*

has been underrated—Frederick Lonsdale, Chetham Strode, Clifford Bax, Rodney Ackland, Peter Ustinov, Terence Rattigan, R. C. Sherriff, Arthur Macrae. Clemence Dane, Esther McCracken and Daphne du Maurier speak in different ways for the women dramatists, of whom there are relatively few. Our prolific writers of farce are Ben Travers, responsible for the famous Aldwych series, and the equally inventive but less witty Vernon Sylvaine. London has also—and I put it last merely because the West End has seen little of it—a growing poetic drama in which the much-debated work of T. S. Eliot (not naturally a man of the theatre) and the plays of such poets as Patric Dickinson, Christopher Fry, and Ronald Duncan are always notable.

Theatres, players, plays—we have them all. They are usually put on by one or another of a group of commercial managements, of which H. M. Tennent, Linnit and Dunfee, Henry Sherek, and Alec Rea and E. P. Clift are typical. The Arts Council of Great Britain, formed during the war, is concerned theatrically with subsidising worth-while plays in London, and in opening up the stage-starved provinces. Probably the most distinguished single name in management is that of Sir Charles Cochran, the “showman” of his age, who has done something valuable for nearly every type of theatrical performance. The London theatre is well served, too, by its producers. The names of Tyrone Guthrie, most imaginative of classical directors, and of Norman Marshall in the modern field, speak for themselves on any programme. Hugh Hunt is destined to be an important figure in the organisation of the Old Vic. Anthony Quayle, who has directed several good productions in London and is also an accomplished actor, is at present producing Shakespeare at Stratford-upon-Avon where he has succeeded Sir Barry Jackson as Director of the Memorial Theatre; and one of the rising young men of his time is Peter Brook, the director of production at Covent Garden Opera House. He, too, made his

name on the difficult stage at Stratford, and though in his early twenties he has already an international reputation in the theatre. Other London producers of distinction include Irene Hentschel and Michael MacOwan. Finally, there are theatrical designers of the quality of Motley, Roger Furse, Tanya Moiseiwitsch, Rolf Gerard, and a dozen others. Since the last years of the war the stage has been calling more and more upon eminent artists and musicians outside the customary theatrical range: the names of John Piper, Leslie Hurry and Antony Hopkins come at once to mind.

You will have gathered, then, that there will always be enough for the playgoer to see within the square mile of the West End—and further afield if he cares to seek out the plays of tomorrow on their handkerchief stages. He will discover matters to criticise: a lack of playwrights of the very first class, a disconcerting uniformity among the younger actresses, a too frequent slurring of speech and maltreatment of the letter “r”; a few theatres that ask too much for seats of inferior comfort, and a universal charge of sixpence for a programme that may be far too meagre in its information. Still, these things are of small account compared with the *excitement* of the theatre, the consciousness that—certainly while three or four players are around—we are back in a period of great acting, and the knowledge that, any night within the square mile, there is at least something (play, performance, or both) that will reward almost any type of mind. The theatre does advance: it is still, I hold, the most exciting thing in the world to sit in a London playhouse as the lights dim and the curtain prepares at last to rise.

THE ENGLISH BALLET

**A**lthough gallery queues did not begin sleeping out before first nights until 1946, when Covent Garden re-opened, ballet may be said to have become a popular art in this country during the war. The box-office graph line, starting in the early 'thirties when English ballet unassumingly established itself in Islington and Notting Hill, wavered along for about ten years, then suddenly in 1942 shot up to "standing room only" level, where it has remained, with only brief, almost imperceptible declensions, ever since.

Look at this phenomenal interest in dancing, at the companies, repertoire, dancers, on which this interest is focused; then look back, past the war-time boom, to the days when Marie Rambert and Ninette de Valois founded their companies, the only indigenous ones which span the period between Diaghileff's death and today. The contrast is remarkable.

It was in 1931 that Ninette de Valois closed her own school and moved to the newly-opened Sadler's Wells Theatre in Islington where, with a handful of pupils, an assistant, and the support of Lilian Baylis, she laid the foundation of an artistic organisation whose future development only she foresaw. Money was as scarce as diamonds in the Vic-Wells organisation of those days, and little was left over for ballet after the drama and opera companies had had their expenses met. Dancers were scarce too, but guest artists of the quality of Lydia Lopokova, Phyllis Bedells, Stanislas Idzikowsky reinforced the resident soloists (de Valois, her assistant, Ursula Moreton, and Frederick Ashton headed these); Alicia Markova and Anton Dolin joined the company for a season or two, a newcomer, Robert Helpmann, appeared from Australia, and one



by one the classical ballets were mounted at full length. Ballet in England, unlike opera, had a school before it had a company—the young tree always grew from strong roots—and after three or four years such dancers as June Brae, Pamela May, Margot Fonteyn, Michael Somes, emerged from the school, via the corps de ballet, to soloist rank. A new class of connoisseur, loyal partisans of “the Wells”, would pay their ninepences regularly for the gallery, more rarely their seven-and-sixpences for circle or stalls, in order not to miss in some small solo a young dancer whom they took pride in having picked out in the corps de ballet. But for the major part of the great audiences that packed the de Basil and Massine seasons at Covent Garden and Drury Lane, Sadler’s Wells hardly existed; it was almost an adventure in slumming to go to Islington to see the English ballet. For the first eight years expansion and development were necessarily very slow.

It was the war which changed this. After two years of extreme insecurity and penury, spent mostly in the provinces, with no orchestra, with salaries at rock-bottom, with Lilian Baylis dead, and the Old Vic and Sadler’s Wells Theatres closed, during which time only great faith and determination could keep a ballet company in existence, the tide turned. The New Theatre in St. Martin’s Lane became the Sadler’s Wells Ballet’s temporary home, and the place to which came during the next three years tens of thousands of war-time Londoners. Whether or not security is, in general, good for artists, stability and appreciation after a long struggle are undoubtedly a wonderful tonic for dancers. Margot Fonteyn and Robert Helpmann, who had led the company during the bad times, were acclaimed as stars by their huge new public, and the general standard of performance rose in a remarkable manner, in spite of the call-up of almost all the English male dancers. For the first time, too, cheeseparing was unnecessary when new productions were mounted.



*Costume design by Leslie Hurrey for Ophelia in the Ballet 'Hamlet', choreography by Robert Helpmann, 1942*

In 1945, the re-opening of the doors of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, to opera and ballet became a possibility, and when the Arts Council and the Covent Garden Opera Trust invited Miss de Valois to lead her company into a new home, and persuaded the Governors of Sadler's Wells to lease their ballet to new masters the enterprise and faith of Lilian Baylis and the fifteen years' work of Ninette de Valois had their reward. And a new phase of expansion at once began.

The expansion took place in three directions. At Covent Garden the company was almost doubled in numbers, and all scenery had to be re-scaled for the huge stage. Plans for foreign tours were at once put in hand, and in the last three years many European opera houses and stage theatres have been visited, those of Paris, Vienna, Prague, Warsaw and Oslo among them. New York is one of the next on the list; at the time of writing, English ballet is due to become a dollar export in the autumn of 1949. At Sadler's Wells a new company was formed in 1946 (under the assistant-directorship of Ursula Moreton) to appear in opera-ballets, to give performances of its own, and to provide a theatrical training-ground for young talent, both dancing and choreographic, not yet ready for the vast Covent Garden stage. The Ballet School moved to fine new premises in Baron's Court, where another once-distant vision of Miss de Valois' was realised: the establishment of an educational regime as an integral part of the School, with teaching on orthodox lines being given to a large proportion of pupils up to school-leaving age, and lecture courses in art and literature being held for older students. To the directorship of the new Sadler's Wells School, Arnold Haskell, once one of the Vic-Wells's sharpest critics, was appointed.

The academic side of the three-fold institution of dancing thus built up by Ninette de Valois is likely in the future to be of international importance. There has always been a Russian

teacher working in the school and theatre—Serguéeff, Volkova, Plucis, Gontcharov, are past and present names. Equally there has always been teaching in the Italian Cecchetti system, de Valois having been a pupil of Cecchetti himself, and many of her collaborators on the academic side having been trained wholly or in part in this method. Twelve years ago (in *Invitation to the Ballet*) de Valois wrote, “possibly in twenty years’ time the English School will be the clearest and most sought after as a training field of any in the world. We are on the way towards a modification, harnessing and compromising of both the Russian and the Blasis-Cecchetti Schools, coupled with an exceedingly sound’ academic theory set up by the Royal Academy of Dancing.” A decade later a conscious and organised step was taken towards this “modification and harnessing”, with the preparation of a curriculum for a series of teachers’ courses to be held each summer at the Sadler’s Wells School. This curriculum, which covers not only the various methods of classical teaching, but also character dancing, mime, Dalcroze eurythmics, and a study of the dancer’s anatomy and type, is worked out by Ninette de Valois and her teaching colleagues from their combined experience in class and theatre.

Thus the present English school of dancing functions in two ways: the organic, that is, the formation of dancers by day-to-day teaching of a combination of the Russian and Italian styles with the theatre as its immediate end; and the academic, that is, the formulation of a system of training for presentation to all teachers from home and overseas who care to study it.

Any visitor to London hoping to sample the various national dishes would be unlucky not to find one of the three chief touring companies at a metropolitan or suburban theatre. Of these, Marie Rambert and her company only recently returned from a successful eighteen months’ tour of Australia and New Zealand. Since its early days at the tiny Mercury Theatre, owned by Ashley Dukes, Mme Rambert’s husband (where

her ballet school still has its headquarters), her company has had no permanent home. In spite of perpetual touring and financial difficulties it has been able considerably to expand in size, to produce new works of high merit, to mount an admirable small-scale *Giselle*, and to remain, what it has always been, an organisation where talent is discovered, encouraged, and enthusiastically presented. In its resilience, vitality and artistry, the Ballet Rambert is one of the most remarkable features of the English ballet landscape.

The International Ballet was founded by Mona Inglesby during the early part of the war, and has developed into a strong, full-scale company with a repertoire based mainly on the big classical ballets. These have been produced for Miss Inglesby by Nicolas Serguéeff, former *régisieur* of the Maryinsky Theatre, Petrograd, who some ten years earlier had produced these same works at Sadler's Wells. They have been shown to enormous new audiences in the cinemas and music-halls where this company has appeared, to packed houses, since the war.

The third and youngest of the touring companies is the Metropolitan Ballet, formed in 1947. Containing a higher proportion of foreign dancers than any of the others, it has been much subject to change of personnel, but has nevertheless been able to present programmes of variety and interest, and to show in performance that a high artistic standard is aimed at.

### *The Choreographers*

Since Fokine, the great innovator, produced *Les Sylphides*, *Petrouchka* and *Carnaval* forty or more years ago, astonishingly few works have been created which cannot be shown to have stemmed from one or other of these prototypes of the abstract, the character and the *divertissement* ballets. Massine, Fokine's successor in the line of choreographic masters, produced a series of masterpieces of the character- or story-ballet type, and made the abstract ballet a matter of furious controversy with

his use of symphonies as the musical background for a tapestry of dance patterns evoked by the music's mood. But these latter works were less an innovation than a development: Les Sylphides writ large and very differently.

The English choreographers have been inescapably Fokine's disciples as regards the type of ballets they have created. Frederick Ashton, romantic, inventive, and capable of being deeply possessed by his chosen music, has worked richly both in the Sylphides and Carnaval veins. Works as different as Dante Sonata (Liszt), Symphonic Variations (Franck), Valses Nobles et Sentimentales (Ravel) and Scènes de Ballet (Stravinsky) are, in their several ways, as expressive of and as strictly related to their music, their *raison d'être*, as Les Sylphides is to Chopin. And Ashton is undoubtedly the modern master of the *divertissement* ballet. Capriol Suite and Façade were two of his earliest and are still among his most popular works. His essays in the story-ballet genre have been most successful where they have most closely approximated to the abstract or "music" ballet: Nocturne is a pre-war example, and Don Juan a recent and remarkable one, in which, unexpectedly, the tense drama derives hardly at all from the traditional Don Juan theme, but almost entirely from the excitement and contrast of line and movement, and from an indefinable quality, as impossible to analyse as the quality of a painting or a piece of music, which informs all the work of Ashton's latest and most mature phase.

Historically of great importance as the first modern three-act ballet produced in this country, and phenomenally successful with its London audiences, Cinderella (December 1948) is also a remarkable testimony to Ashton's ability to work on the largest scale, to his creative stamina and courage. His achievement includes, as an executant, a gem of characterisation, irresistibly touching and funny, as one of the two Ugly Sisters.

Of all English choreographers, Ashton is, as has often been pointed out, the least English, the most cosmopolitan; he is

instinctively a profound traditionalist, original in the most subtle way, not seizing new ideas out of the air or searching for them in obscure corners, but evolving what is new in his work out of the material at his disposal—the music, the classical style, the dancers on whom he is working, and his own wealth of choreographic experience, his emotional mastery of the plastic, his gifts of wit and poetry.

Ninette de Valois, on the other hand, Irish and more distantly Scottish in descent (in spite of her stage name) is the choreographer who has given to this country's corpus of works its most distinctively English characteristics, and its two most completely English works—*Job* and *The Rake's Progress*. She is above all a dramatist working in the medium of ballet, and from the first discovered and exploited the considerable gifts for characterisation and acting in English dancers. All the de Valois works in the current repertoire are character ballets, if one stretches this term to cover her *Job*, and it is these works—and the character ballets of Robert Helpmann—which have been considered by foreign critics to be recognisable examples of a school of English choreography in the portrayal of whose characters the English dancers most excel.

Created in 1931 to a scenario devised by Geoffrey Keynes from Blake's "Vision of the Book of Job", with music composed by Vaughan Williams, *Job* was the first masterpiece of English choreography. In 1948 it was enlarged for the Covent Garden stage; the result more than confirmed the seventeen-year-old estimates of the plastic beauty, the dramatic force of the conflict of good and evil, and the extraordinary moral nobility of this work. Standing somewhat outside the abstract-character-*divertissement* classification, *Job*, described by its author as a "masque for dancing", owes little debt to any balletic forerunners.

*The Rake's Progress*, her second masterpiece, takes its origin from the paintings by William Hogarth under that title and, apart from its dramatic qualities, is the outstanding example of



*Set design after William Blake by John Piper, 1948, for 'Job : A Masque for Dancing',  
choreography by Ninette de Valois, first performed in 1931*



de Valois' gift for realising in movement the essential style of a period—in this case the eighteenth-century borderland where gentleman, tout and rogue meet—and for characterisation, tragic and comic.

Checkmate, dating from 1937, *The Haunted Ballroom* and *The Gods Go A-Begging*, from 1934 and 1936 respectively, are other de Valois works now in performance. Checkmate, a grand-scale combination of drama and pageantry, shows a brilliant use of stylisation of movement, rather than detailed characterisation, to give the chess pieces their value. At the other end of the scale is *The Gods Go A-Begging*, as delightful in its eighteenth-century manner to the eye as its Handel music is to the ear, and owing its unfading charm after fifteen years of continuous performance to the light-handed excellence of its craftsmanship. For the last few years, the always increasing volume of Miss de Valois' work as director and administrator has absorbed all her time and energy. Her creative work has been done in other fields than choreography.

Robert Helpmann, the third Sadler's Wells choreographer, is akin to de Valois in that he too is a character-ballet composer, but with infinitely less interest in dancing for its own sake. He belongs to the theatre rather than to ballet, and as he has excelled as an executant in mime and character roles, so his two outstanding choreographic creations, *Hamlet* and *Miracle in the Gorbals*, have been balletic mime-dramas. *Hamlet* has been severely handled by the purists as not being a ballet at all. Like *Job*, it almost defies classification, and explores territory on the furthest verge of the character-ballet range; at once a psychological study, a commentary on Shakespeare, a drama and a spectacle, it remains a work that no dictum of Noverre or Fokine could be held to exclude from the repertoire of true ballet. Its performance by anyone but classically trained dancers would be unthinkable. So too in *Miracle in the Gorbals*, set with uncompromising realism in a Glasgow slum, "the

*maître de ballet*, striking out beyond the customary limits of his art, seeks in these same passions their characteristic movements and gestures: and binding with the same chain those steps, gestures and facial expressions to the sentiments he desires to express, he finds, in bringing together all these elements, the means of producing the most astonishing effects." (*Letters on Dancing* by J. G. Noverre.)

Helpmann is a deliberate experimentalist, searching for new themes and new ways of presenting those themes; liable to demand of ballet as an art-form more than the orthodox would permit—and to confound their prohibitions by his success; less concerned with dancing as an end than as a means, together with scenario, music, decor, and all the resources of stage-craft, "of producing the most astonishing effects".

Andrée Howard, as dancer, choreographer and designer, was a product of Marie Rambert's Ballet Club, for whose small pre-war company she produced a small masterpiece, *Lady Into Fox*. Neither the abstract nor the *divertissement* ballet has attracted her; she has almost always chosen to tell a story, although with a stronger feeling for the emotional than for the dramatic situation. Imaginative, full of fantasy, romantic by temperament, very feminine, she suggests, hints, creates an atmosphere, weaves patterns—and makes her dancers dance. She has recently mounted four works for the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet; her latest invention, *Selina* (autumn 1948), is an essay in the mock-romantic, whose combination of sentiment, light parody of the classical style, and broad humour, being new, has enchanted some, displeased others. For Rambert she created, a year or two ago, *The Sailor's Return* (like *Lady Into Fox* based on a David Garnett novel), one of her most complete and moving ballets.

A lesser galaxy of choreographers must be briefly mentioned. Mona Inglesby has contributed a number of works to the repertoire of the company of which she is director and principal



*Set design by Edward Burra for the Helpmann-Bentham-Bless Ballet  
'Miracle in the Gorbals', 1944*

dancer. Frank Staff produced early works of much promise—Peter and the Wolf, Czernyana—for Rambert, but has yet to fulfil that promise. Walter Gore, since he rejoined the Rambert company after his war service in the Navy, has produced two ballets, the most successful of which was his Mr. Punch. Celia Franca's Khadra, one of the most original character works in the repertoire at Sadler's Wells, is up to now her only important creation. Anthony Burke has also contributed a character ballet of much originality to this repertoire, a gipsy drama called The Vagabonds. John Cranko, a young South African dancer, is barely launched on his choreographic career, but his is a name to look for in the future.

### *Design and Music*

"The more I thought of that problem of the composition of ballet, the more plainly I understood that perfect ballet can only be created by the very closest fusion of the three elements of dancing, painting and music. When I mount a ballet, I always keep these three elements in my mind." (Quoted in *Diaghileff* by Arnold L. Haskell.) This attitude of Diaghileff's to the creation of a ballet, so revolutionary in its day, has become a truism of the ballet-director's office. The most important element in the tradition which English ballet has inherited from the Diaghileff period, it was learnt at first hand by two of the present directors of ballet, Ninette de Valois and Marie Rambert, and studied at close quarters for many years by Arnold Haskell, who has never ceased in all his writings to stress the importance of this evangel: that choreography, music and ballet are part of an indivisible whole.

Artists of the highest standing have from the first been invited to partake in the triple act of ballet creation in this country. Among those who have recently been exceptionally successful have been John Piper, particularly his recent re-creation of the Blake pictures for Job, Edward Burra, with *Miracle* in the

Gorbals at the top of his list, and Leslie Hurry, who created a sensation with his setting and costumes for the ballet *Hamlet*.

Two of the finest theatre artists of this era, Oliver Messel and the late Rex Whistler, have both worked for the Sadler's Wells Ballet, Messel designing the magnificent scenery and costumes for *The Sleeping Beauty*, and Whistler those for de Valois' *The Rake's Progress*, among others. Sophie Fedorovich's extraordinary power of realising pictorially a choreographer's intention and her understanding of the theatre have given her a unique place among ballet designers. She has worked mostly and most successfully with Ashton (e.g. *Dante Sonata*, *Valses Nobles et Sentimentales* and *Symphonic Variations*), but there cannot be a choreographer with whom she has collaborated who does not feel for her the warmest gratitude.

Cecil Beaton has twice worked with Ashton; McKnight Kauffer once, with splendid results, with de Valois (in *Checkmate*); Hugh Stevenson and William Chappell have had close and constant connections with English ballet since its earliest days. Roger Furse, Nadia Benois, Vivienne Kernot, Guy Shepard, Honor Frost, James Bailey (whose first commissioned work was for *Giselle* at Covent Garden) are others who, in Arnold Haskell's words, "understand what the music and action is about, and who dress the idea as well as the dancers".

Musically the English ballet has been very much less adventurous than with design, and collaboration of choreographers with composers less close and less frequent than with painters. Vaughan Williams, William Walton and Arthur Bliss are the only three composers of international repute who have contributed important works to the ballet repertoire, the Vaughan Williams score for *Job* being the outstanding original work of the present generation. Arthur Bliss's connection with Sadler's Wells goes back to the same early period; more recently his music for *Checkmate*, *Miracle in the Gorbals* and *Adam Zero* have been notable examples of composer-choreographer col-

laboration. Apart from his Façade music, not originally composed for ballet use, William Walton is unrepresented in the current repertoire; his last original ballet score, for Ashton's *The Quest* in 1943, has not lately been performed.

The dominating musical figure in the ballet world has been Constant Lambert, musical director of the Sadler's Wells for sixteen years, and now one of its three artistic directors. As well as selecting, arranging, orchestrating and conducting ballet music, and attending to the thousand and one other duties, administrative and advisory, that fall to a musical director, especially during a company's formative years, he contributed several original scores to the repertoire, the last of which was his palindromic music for Ashton's *Horoscope* in 1938.

### *The Dancers*

In English ballet today there is one *prima ballerina assoluta*, one name that in a hundred years will be spoken whenever the post-Diaghileff period is discussed. Now in her prime, Margot Fonteyn stands alone; her position in this country is unquestioned, not only by the public, but by other dancers here and by her contemporaries coming from abroad. By the dancers among whom she works, she is loved, and even revered; when she comes into rehearsal, faces light up, attention sharpens; when she gets up to rehearse a solo or pas de deux, silence falls on the usually-chattering fringe round the room; everyone watches every step. No higher tribute can be paid to a dancer than this unconscious one from those who see her every day, hard at work.

Fonteyn has always worked very hard, and never more so than during the last few years during which the hidden strength of her technique and the resulting control and authority of her performances have so remarkably increased. As a critic, Annabel Farjeon, recently wrote: "She seems to have grown beyond conscious effort, for movements of the most complex and violent

kinds flow from her limbs as easily as running water." In the classical roles her dancing is the purest and noblest poetry: in line and soft fluid movement, in beauty of face and carriage, in the exquisite supple strength of her feet, in musicality, in the transcendental purity of her style. Her emotional expressiveness, whether of happiness or grief, is tender and profound.

Robert Helpmann too has made a unique place for himself in the dancing world, but rather for his gifts as an artist of the theatre than as dancer *tout court*. Coming to ballet when he was already over twenty, and thus too late to develop fully in strength of technique, he added a remarkable finish and style to his innate feeling for line. The extraordinary growth in the popularity of the big classical ballets between the mid-thirties and the end of the war was due in no small part to Helpmann's contribution as premier danseur—in vivid, expressive mime, in whole-hearted characterisation of the romantic prince-hero, in the superb timing and support of his partnering of the ballerina. His outstanding achievements however have been in character roles of a wide range, from Satan in *Job* to the drunken O'Reilly in *de Valois' Prospect Before Us*, from the Rake and Hamlet to the old Red King in *Checkmate* and Carabosse in *The Sleeping Beauty*. Since 1944 he has also made a considerable reputation as an actor on the legitimate stage and in films. All this, and his work as choreographer, adds up to an unparalleled variety of success.

The five classical ballets which, during the last two decades, have been performed in full—*The Sleeping Beauty*, *Le Lac des Cygnes*, *Giselle*, *Coppelia* and *Casse-Noisette*—have naturally become the ultimate test for the danseuse; her ability to fulfil the exacting demands on stamina, technique and artistry made by the leading roles in these works decides whether or not she may legitimately be ranked as a ballerina. There are five dancers in the companies of today who may so be ranked.

Beryl Grey made an astonishing début as Odette-Odile in *Le Lac des Cygnes* on her fifteenth birthday, a performance remarkable for its unselfconscious grace and facility, musical flow, and pure extended line. During the last six years she has developed her exceptional natural gifts into a mature artistry whose range is only limited by her height. Her lightness and elevation give intense pleasure in such ballets as *Giselle* and *Les Sylphides*. Moira Shearer also has a beautiful line, and a particularly clean, elegant style, as well as striking beauty, with her red hair and delicate, porcelain skin. She takes in her turn all the classical leading roles, and has been selected by Ashton for important parts in his recent works. Pamela May, a contemporary of Fonteyn, has had a career somewhat interrupted, first by marriage and the birth of her son, later by a knee operation, but in spite of this she has been able to attain ballerina rank. Besides her classical roles, the Black Queen in *Checkmate* and the Can-Can Dancer in *La Boutique Fantasque* are two of her particularly successful characterisations.

The fourth dancer ranking with the foregoing trio is Violetta Elvin, but she, coming here from Russia after the war, can hardly be called a representative English dancer. Charming and modest, she has worked unsparingly to attain her present position in the Sadler's Wells Ballet, uninfluenced by immediate applause for what was at once recognised as a fascinatingly un-English style.

Undisputed ballerina of the International Ballet is Mona Inglesby, who carries the main weight of that company's classical repertoire. There is probably not another dancer in the country who could sustain her triple burden as director, choreographer and ballerina, and continue to give performances of the consistent standard she attains. Mention must also be made of Sally Gilmour, leading dancer of the Ballet Rambert before its departure for Australia. Hardly strong





*Costume design by Nadia Benois for the Metamorphosis Scene in 'Lady into Fox', choreography  
by Andrée Howard for Ballet Rambert, 1939*

enough technically to claim ballerina rank, she is a fine artist whose Giselle sets her high among dancers of that role, and whose name as long as the ballet is performed will be associated with Lady Into Fox.

For the English danseur the tests are somewhat different. During the lifetime of most young dancers no performance of the leading male roles in the classical ballets has been given that would make these parts an obligatory ambition for the talented and aspiring youngster. In other words, no *danseur noble* of the first rank has been seen here during the last decade at least. No choreographer has been inspired to create roles for such a dancer in the same way that Ashton has been stimulated to create a long series of classical solos for Fonteyn. It is in the character ballets that the outstanding solos have been written for male dancers, and it is in such roles that most of this generation of danseurs have made their reputations, rather than by virtue of their purely classical work. Harold Turner, Michael Somes, Alexis Rassine and John Hart, of the Sadler's Wells Ballet, John Gilpin of the Ballet Rambert, who partner the dancers appearing in the ballerina roles, if asked to name the performance by which they hoped to be judged, might each quote works outside the classical repertoire, a choice no danseuse of equivalent standing could possibly make.

There are a score more English soloists capable of performances of high quality: near-ballerinas like Margaret Dale, June Brae, Pauline Clayden; character artists like Celia Franca, Julia Farron, Walter Gore; young dancers of exceptional promise, of whom Nadia Nerina, Alexander Grant, Elaine Fifiield are three among many more. But instead of a long list of these, let me give a final quotation from Ninette de Valois, ". . . There are two forms of policy to follow: (1) The performance in which emphasis is primarily laid on the personal talents and virtuosity of the executants; this from every con-

ceivable angle endangers the balance of the whole. (2) The performance which places the balance of the music, decor and choreography first, the executants' contribution to fall in as a part of the whole. The latter is theatrically the ideal result, but to adhere strictly to it is extremely difficult; the human element also demands consideration and attention."

English dancers, and especially Sadler's Wells dancers, are often criticised for their lack of sparkle, glamour, virtuoso display, personality, temperament. They are also praised, especially by foreign critics, for their discipline, responsiveness and flexibility as a corporate whole, and for artistic restraint, integrity and absence of vulgarity in their performances as individuals, for their willing subordination to the demands of their roles. Criticism and praise alike follow inevitably from the unswerving pursuance during the last seventeen years of the second of the two policies outlined above.

With the qualification somewhat reluctantly admitted by Miss de Valois, but in practice carried out with the utmost sympathy and understanding and the most penetrating and farseeing wisdom—that the human element demands consideration and attention—no Sadler's Wells dancer has ever been permitted, much less encouraged, to develop or express his or her personality except strictly within the ambience of the company in general, and the range of a given role in particular. To this writer at least, it appears that the resultant whole is infinitely greater than the sum of its parts.

LONDON OCCASIONS

London has an atmosphere all her own. She stages the big occasion as no other city, because every street, every corner is redolent of history, and because, despite her social inequalities, she is easily the most good-humoured and pleasure-loving of all our cities. She attracts visitors from all over the world, not only because of her size and wealth, but also because her name stands for something essentially English. The tolerance and good humour of the cockney are apparent at all the big sporting and ceremonial functions, and he infects with his own enthusiasm and zest for life the thousands who come to London for a few days' holiday at all times of the year. The crowds that throng the streets to see a Royal Procession or pack into buses and underground trains to go to Lord's or Wembley or Twickenham are more cosmopolitan than any other in the British Isles. The Londoner himself takes these festivities in his stride, as he is essentially a part of them, though they would not be complete without the addition of the tripper, the sightseer, the man from the provinces and the man from the Dominions.

Whatever the season, London has always something to offer. The councils and committees of the big sporting associations, the Football Association, the Marylebone Cricket Club, the Lawn Tennis Association, the English Rugby Union, and countless smaller bodies have their headquarters there, and London, therefore, becomes a clearing-house for every kind of athlete and every sort of tournament. It may be Cup Final day at Wembley when a hundred thousand football enthusiasts congregate for the biggest match of the year. Or perhaps it's Boat Race day, when the banks of the Thames from Putney to Mortlake are packed with a surging multitude to see the greatest row-

ing race in the world. Or it may be high summer with a Test Match against Australia at Lord's, or the Lawn Tennis Championships at Wimbledon. Or it is winter time, and rugger folk are on their way to Twickenham for the Varsity match or an International.

But London's gala days are ever varied. Once a year at least, and usually in the autumn, the crowds line the sanded streets from Buckingham Palace to the House of Lords to see the pageantry of a Royal Procession as the King and Queen drive in state to open Parliament. Or it is early June, and the Army shows its allegiance to the King on his official birthday by trooping the colour on the Horse Guards Parade. Or the final festival of the year—the Lord Mayor's Show—emerges resplendent from the November gloom, presenting that odd mixture of the medieval and the modern, as the new Lord Mayor rides in state through the streets of the City amid a pageant as ingenious as the wit of man can devise.

Let us go with one of these crowds, on the first big occasion of the year, to Twickenham, the home of English rugger, transformed from its early beginnings as a splendid playing-field into a huge arena, with double-decker stands, housing over seventy thousand spectators. It is mid-January, when Wales are the visitors, and the trip to Twickenham is the big event of the Welsh rugger man's year. He descends on London by coach, car and train, wearing his red and white rosette and making the streets resound with his songs as he sees the sights in the morning. Waterloo from midday onwards becomes a seething, jostling mass of humanity, the crowds pile into the trains, twenty to a carriage, and lucky is he who wins a seat. At the ground, the standing room is quickly filled, whilst those who have reserved seats congregate behind the West Stand, wearing club ties and scarves, the variegated colours of the many Old Boys' clubs contrasting with the light blue of Cambridge and the dark blue of Oxford. Twickenham is a social event as well as a football

match, and in the hour before the game the huge car parks are a mass of picnic parties and little knots of friends. Meanwhile, standing room has vanished and the excitement and good humour of the crowd find expression in the antics of the young Welshman who insists on planting a leek on the cross-bar, or high on one of the uprights, before falling into the arms of a policeman, who walks him off the field amid cheers and laughter.

The teams come out in turn to be photographed—a chilly and nervy time, this—and just before the kick-off they line up on the field of play to be presented to the King. For Royalty frequently graces an International, and there are few more impressive sights than this vast crowd standing bare-headed as the teams stand to attention and His Majesty appears from beneath the West Stand. He has a word or two for each player as he walks down the two lines, the red jerseys and blue shorts of Wales and the all-white of England standing out against the rich green of the turf. Then the game is on and for the next eighty minutes there is one continuous roar as the thirty gladiators run, kick, pass, tackle and scrummage furiously. Twickenham is a great spectacle, impressive and exhilarating.

A noisier, more boisterous and more cosmopolitan crowd, complete with rattles, whistles and what would you, descends upon London for the climax of the Association football season—the F.A. Cup Final. Professional soccer is a business tremendous in extent and highly competitive, and though a preponderance of the leading clubs have their headquarters in the Midlands and the North, the Cup Final is always played in London. The game's ever-increasing popularity led to the establishment in 1923 of a permanent home for the Final at Wembley Stadium—the most grandiose sports ground in England, with an arena so large that it tends to dwarf what elsewhere would look like a huge crowd.

Such is the demand to see the Cup Final that the authorities have made it an all-ticket affair, and excursion trains and

motor-coach parties converge on London from West, Midlands and the far North, each bringing its quota of excited fans who are "oop fer t'coop", so that before the match the streets of London and her northern suburbs are a babel of dialects.

The Cup competition has a strange glamour unlike any other tournament, and even if two London teams were in the Final, the invasion would be just as headlong. On the day of the match, usually towards the end of April, all roads lead to Wembley. Car-hire firms do a roaring trade, motor-coaches jostle with private cars, and special buses and underground trains disgorge their loads of excited humanity on the streets near the Stadium. The vast car parks gradually absorb the traffic, and the stands and terraces of the huge arena fill up as fast as the turnstiles can revolve. As the time for the kick-off approaches, the crowd gives vent to its pent-up emotions by community singing, a hundred thousand voices swelling as one to the strains of popular tunes, and ending with "Abide With Me". No sooner have the last notes died away than a deafening roar indicates the appearance of the two teams. They walk out on to the green pool of beautifully laid grass, a little dazed by the size of the amphitheatre and by the immensity of their reception. For everyone in the Stadium has an uninterrupted view of the whole playing area, which perhaps makes up for a loss of the intimacy experienced on lesser grounds. The players line up in front of the Royal Box, flanked by the referee and the linesmen, and as the King steps out on to the field, cheering reaches a crescendo. Despite the intense nervous strain—ninety minutes of high-speed football between two teams trained to the last ounce—the game itself is usually worthy of the occasion, and when a goal is scored, the din has to be heard to be believed. After the final whistle, the King presents the Cup and medals to the winning team, the Stadium slowly empties, and the trek back to town or provinces begins.

Sandwiched between these two football matches is London's more domestic show—the Boat Race. What is it which so grips the public imagination that, despite the uncertainty of the weather and the chill March winds, half London seems to congregate on both banks of the Thames, merely to catch a fleeting glimpse of two cockle-shells of boats as they tear through the water, each propelled by eight strong young men? Here are no grandstands giving an uninterrupted view of long stretches of water, so those intent on seeing the race must be on the towpath bright and early to select a pitch. Dare one suggest that Londoners flock to see the Boat Race because it is a free show, with no high-priced seats and no charge for admission? No, they go because it is the only race of its kind, unique as an exhibition of endurance, skill and teamwork, which appeals to thousands who take no interest in any other sport. If the weather is kind, men, women and children of all classes make this a gala day, and enthusiasm and excitement are so intense that people who have never visited, nor are ever likely to have any association with, either University sport dark-blue or light-blue badges and heatedly champion their favourites.

Mingling with the crowd, one hears arguments on all sides as to who is going to win. A young girl is sure it will be Cambridge, since she has fallen for the fair-haired blue-eyed Cambridge stroke, whilst her young man laughs at her, and tells her that the superior weight of the big men in the middle of the Oxford boat will carry the day. They are quite near Barnes Bridge, which commands a good view of the long stretch past Duke's Meadows, and this is near enough to the finish for them to spot the likely winner as they go by. Suddenly, a short silence descends, till distant cheering from the direction of Putney indicates that the race has started. The cheering is taken up all along the route, many people being able to follow the race by means of car and portable

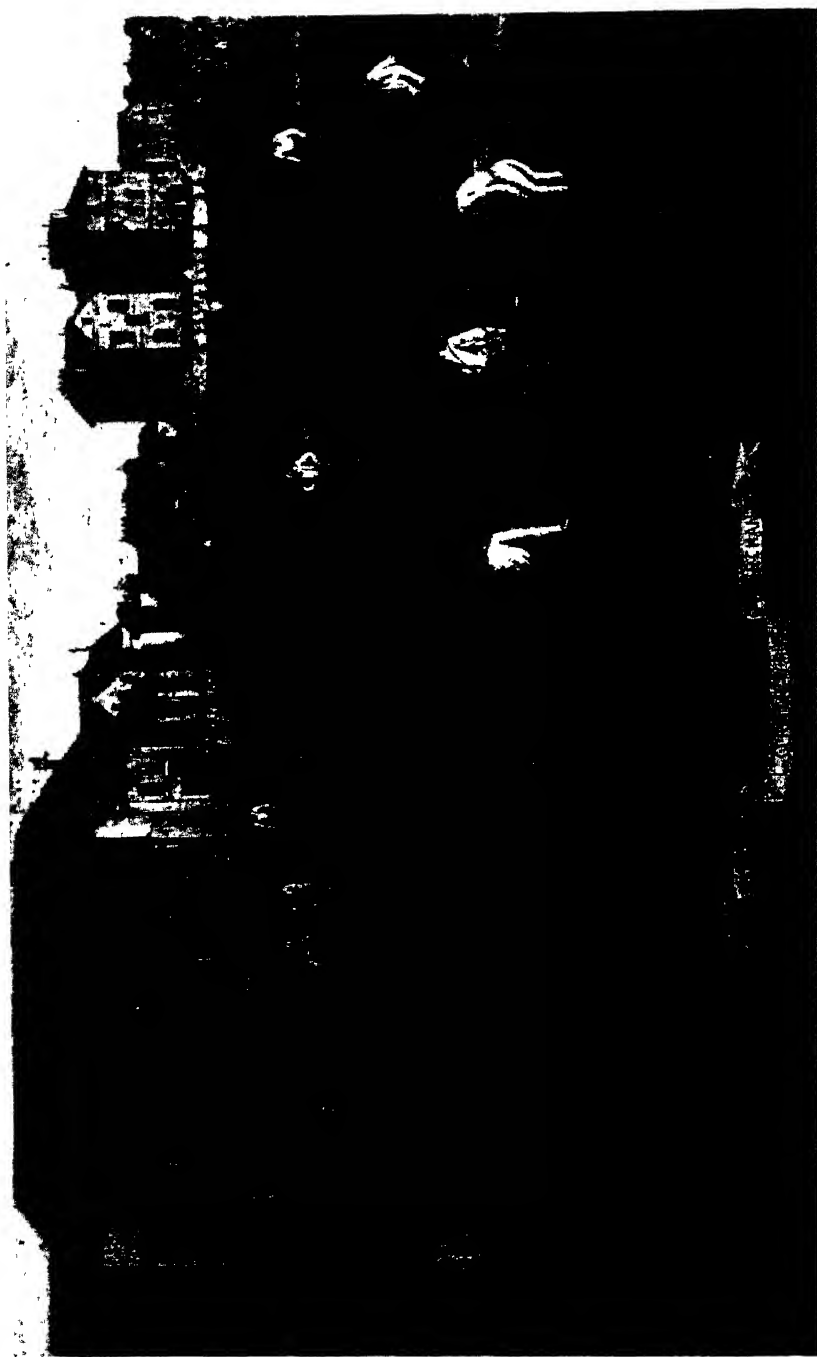


radios, and after what seems an age, the boats come into view for the last gruelling mile, the oars entering and leaving the water with perfect rhythm. As they come nearer, one can see it is a neck-and-neck race, and in between shouts of "Oxford!", "Come on Cambridge!" some wiseacre is heard saying that Oxford, who have the inside for the last bend, will just pull it off. Then comes the great moment when the crews tear past—tired, but still game for a fighting finish. There is a strange clockwork precision about them—each crew rowing like one man. Behind them chugs a flotilla of launches carrying the umpire, photographers, broadcasters, journalists and bunches of Old Blues, hands in pockets, caps pulled down, gazing at the boats ahead. They shoot Barnes Bridge and are lost to view. After a moment or two, a roar from Mortlake acclaims the winner, and all these months of preparation have culminated in triumph or disappointment. As the crews paddle slowly towards the bank, the crowds gradually disperse home, or to shops and offices, and the river returns to normal.

Spring passes by and summer reigns before Londoners again have occasion to gather in their thousands and cheer. On a morning in early June the whole of the Mall will be lined with spectators to see the King ride to the Horse Guards Parade for Trooping the Colour. This is a special parade on the King's birthday—an enlarged version of the daily guard-mounting—and takes the form of a ceremonial march past in which the colour is trooped down the line of Guards. The Horse Guards Parade is the site of the former tournament yard of the Palace of Westminster, where in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Regiment of Guards detailed for daily duty formed up on parade and ceremonially sent for and received their Colour. On this twentieth-century day the Guards form up with the massed bands, each man in full dress, and the spectators see the most gorgeous display



*Lord Mayor's Show, early nineteenth century*



*A Cricket Match at Lord's in 1858*

of military pomp and ceremony that London or any other city has to offer.

The day's pageantry begins and ends at Buckingham Palace. His Majesty rides out from the forecourt and salutes the waiting crowd, who give him a special cheer on this, his official birthday. His procession along the Mall is headed by the band of the Household Cavalry, who also provide the Sovereign's escort. As the imposing cavalcade turns into the Horse Guards Parade, your eyes are attracted by the bands, drums and fifes of the Brigade of Guards, massed at the far end of the parade ground, a gorgeous, glittering company, but outshone by the five drum-majors in their state gold coats. The King's Colour is facing the bands, the Field Officer in Brigade-Waiting, who commands the parade, moves forward to greet the King, and the crowd cheer and wave handkerchiefs as the stately procession moves to its appointed place. The King, surrounded by a brilliant escort of high-ranking officers, takes up his position for the Royal Salute, inspects the line, and then watches the massed bands, marching and counter-marching, first in slow time, then breaking into quick time. The climax is reached when, with superb precision, a young Guards officer, attended by an escort, slowly, and with high dignity, troops the Colour down the line of Guards. The Trooping ended, the Guards march past the saluting base, with the Colour in front, to the familiar strains of "The British Grenadiers". Suddenly in the distance the dull thud of the guns firing the Birthday Salute breaks the air, the bands march off the parade ground heading towards the Mall, and the King puts himself at the head of his Guards.

If you have missed the actual ceremony, you may perhaps catch a glimpse of the brilliant epilogue—the most stirring military procession in London's year. The massed bands, resplendent in full-dress uniform, their instruments glistening in the sunshine, turn into the Mall and head for Buckingham

Palace, and a roar of cheering breaks out as the King is seen on horseback leading the scarlet column along to cheerful martial tunes. The whole imposing cavalcade, some 2,000 strong, passes through the main gate, and the crowds surge forward to see the dismissal of the parade and then loiter on to listen to the playing of the bands.

Thus the Londoner shows his affection for his Sovereign and, at the same time, indulges in his love of pageantry.

The scene changes to Lord's—the home of cricket—where one can escape from contemporary civilisation and transport oneself to a less hustling and bustling age. This lovely old ground—the greatest, though by no means the largest, in the world—has atmosphere, tradition, and character. No lover of the game has savoured its beauty and its richness till he has watched a match there, and gazed upon the stately Pavilion, the big modern grandstand, the old-world Tavern, and the sacred turf, green in spring, but browning as the summer wears on. Despite cinemas, and cars, and the encroachment of an already over-long football season, cricket still retains its charm, and on the big match days the queue winds down St. John's Wood Road and far round the corner. It is a quiet, patient and happy crowd, hatless for the most part, the men carrying the inevitable mackintosh for protection against the English summer, or for use as a cushion, everyone with his supply of sandwiches for the day.

The greatest match at Lord's is the Test Match versus Australia once every four years. Time-honoured fixtures such as Gentlemen versus Players, and Oxford versus Cambridge, attract the cricket connoisseur; a county match between Middlesex and Surrey may fill the ground; but no one can appreciate the real Lord's till he has been to a Test Match, and particularly an Australian Test Match. The tension and pent-up excitement as the white-coated umpires walk sedately out to the wicket, followed at a respectful distance

by the fielding side and the opening pair of batsmen, reaches a climax as the first ball is bowled. The hum of conversation in the stands and on the benches is stilled. The little knots of people who have congregated on the asphalt outside the Tavern turn towards the wicket. Even the old gentlemen who watch the match from their high-backed stools in the Long Room of the Pavilion stop talking about what Grace and Fry and "Ranji" would have done with modern bowling. The first scoring stroke, the first piece of fielding, the first maiden over, produce decorous applause all round the ground; a brilliant stroke, or the fall of a wicket, is greeted with prolonged hand-clapping, whilst the Members, those aristocrats of cricket, can pay no higher tribute to a great innings than to stand and applaud the batsman returning to the Pavilion.

For cricket is above all things a serene and courtly game, where vulgar cheering is as much out of place as applause would be during a church service. As the game goes on, friends are meeting and talking of older and, maybe, better days. No matter how good the cricket, they will steal away to have a word with old So-and-so, and the conversation will turn to great deeds of the past. For just as cricket has inspired more good literature than any other game, so it provides its lovers with an inexhaustible fund of memories. During the luncheon interval, the spectators often leave their places, and stroll across the ground to get as close to the roped-off "middle" as possible, the man with the mackintosh, who has queued for his 2s. 6d. seat, rubbing shoulders with the Member with the M.C.C. tie. There they gaze with reverence at the bowlers' foot-marks, the worn batting crease, and that "spot" that has led to the downfall of more than one brilliant batsman. Their ruminations are disturbed by the bell in the Pavilion signalling the re-start of the game, and they return to their seats in the sun, content to while away the rest of the day in peace and quiet, watching the best of all games.

Meanwhile, in another part of London, the magic name of Wimbledon is giving just as great a thrill to lawn-tennis devotees as does Wembley to the footballer and Lord's to the cricketer. Here, for a fortnight at the height of the summer season, the world's leading players battle for the honour of winning the Wimbledon Championships. They come from America, from Europe, from the Dominions and from the Far East: as cosmopolitan a gathering of competitors as can be seen anywhere—an Olympic Games in miniature. The grounds of the All England Club lie in park-like surroundings, the perfect setting for social event and championships alike. Evergreen hedges intersect the gracious lawns: trees in the near distance conceal the close proximity of the city: the large marquee has a garden-party atmosphere, and the crowd that comes to watch the play and stroll along the asphalt paths is gay and well-dressed.

For the players, the Championships are a serious and strenuous business. All the eighteen courts are kept at full stretch, at least during the first week, and the miniature amphitheatre of the Centre Court is packed to overflowing to see the chief matches. The climax of the meeting—the final of the Men's Singles—provides as stern a test of individual skill and endurance as can be seen on any field of sport. As the two men serve and drive and volley and smash on that superb green rectangle, every movement watched by thousands of pairs of eyes, their strokes and demeanour are applauded or criticised, whilst those who have not been lucky enough to gain admittance stand outside and watch the progress of the match on the electric score-board. For Wimbledon attracts the interest of an ever-increasing public, and is no mere tennis party on a grand scale.

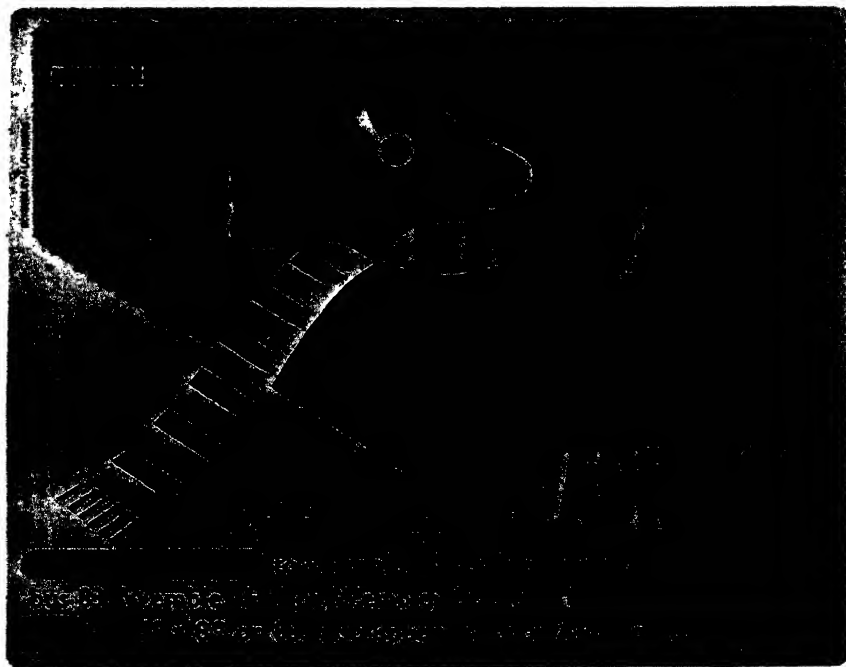
August and September are holiday months, and the autumn is well advanced before London stages her last two pageants of the year—the State Opening of Parliament and the Lord

# H.M. the KING OPENS PARLIAMENT

**Tues Nov 3  
at 12 noon**

**By  
UNDERGROUND  
ST JAMES PARK  
TRAFALGAR SQ.  
WESTMINSTER  
GREEN PARK  
VICTORIA  
STRAND**

**Or by  
bus, tram or coach**



*London Transport Posters by Osbert Lancaster, 1936, and Eckersley Lombers, 1938*



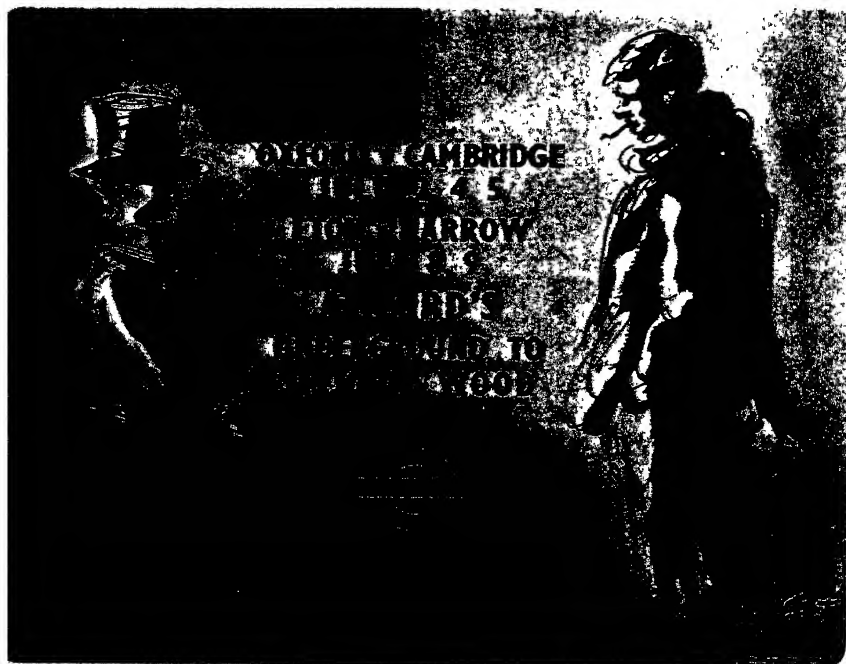
# TROOPING THE COLOUR

JUNE 9 at 11 a.m. • HORSE GUARDS PARADE



BY UNDERGROUND  
TO  
TRAFFALGAR SQUARE  
JAMES PARK  
WEIMSTER STAND  
OR  
BY BUS • TRAM • COACH

The Standard Press, London



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1.100 2 4 5  
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London Transport Posters by Feliks Topolski, 1938

Mayor's Show. The processional drive to open Parliament dates back at least to the days of Queen Elizabeth, whose love of display made it a brilliant and important occasion. In those days her subjects came to cheer her on her way to lecture Parliament, and they still turn out today, even though a Royal Opening is purely symbolic, a glorious survival.

The crowds gather from an early hour all along the mile-and-a-half processional route. Only a small proportion of them can have more than a fleeting glimpse of the King and Queen, and yet they roll up in their thousands, braving a raw November morning to satisfy an inborn love of pageantry. For a few brief seconds they are transported from this age of mechanisation into the old world of coach and horses. Somehow the very dullness of the weather gives a beauty of its own, and though the colours of the uniforms are subdued, the gold of the Royal Coach seems to radiate a warm glow. With its ornamented roof, its mahogany-coloured panels engraved with the Royal coat of arms, its ancient carriage lamps and its brightly painted chassis, it forms the perfect centrepiece to an imposing cavalcade. The King and Queen sit side by side, acknowledging through the glass windows the cheers of the crowd; and if the coach is as comfortable inside as it is splendid to look at, they must enjoy the drive. The coach is drawn by the famous Windsor Greys, driven four-in-hand by a coachman in black-laced hat and scarlet livery, sitting on a box covered with a magnificent hammer-cloth of red and gold. The traditional escort of Household Cavalry heads the procession, followed by the coach, with an Officer bearing the Royal Standard, and a second division of the escort immediately behind, and bringing up the rear are the state landaus carrying the King's Ministers and the great Officers of State. These may be different people as the years go by, but they remain, with their fairy-tale names, figures in an unchanged setting of the picture.

The procession starts from Buckingham Palace and follows a route along the tree-lined Mall, across the Horse Guards Parade, under the Horse Guards Arch, and wheels majestically into Whitehall. There the crowds stand a dozen deep on the pavements, held back by a line of Guardsmen, and all the windows of the Government offices are filled with Civil Servants and distinguished visitors. How they would love it if the present King and Queen rode on horseback, as did Queen Elizabeth, or James I "with rich crown upon his head and most royally caparisoned"! The nearer the procession approaches Westminster, the louder grow the cheers. The bells of St. Margaret's Church peal out a welcome, and as the State Coach draws up at the Victoria Tower outside the House of Lords, Their Majesties are greeted by a fanfare of trumpets, which is punctuated by guns in St. James's Park firing a Royal Salute. Another procession now forms to conduct the King and Queen first to the Robing Room and thence into the House of Lords, where the King reads his Speech to the most imposing and colourful assembly in the land. The judges are there in their ermine cloaks and full-bottomed wigs, massed beside the Woolsack. The white robes of the bishops form a striking contrast to the scarlet and ermine of the peers, whilst the glittering attire of the peeresses who throng the galleries is rivalled only by the diverse and decorative uniforms of the diplomats. The King's Speech on these occasions is no longer a personal expression of the Royal wishes, as it was in the Middle Ages, but is a Ministerial declaration of policy, and as such concerns not only this particular assembly but also the thousands who throng the processional route. They wait to cheer Their Majesties on their homeward drive, maybe conscious that in watching this pageant of old-world splendour they are taking part in the making of history.

And so we come to the last big occasion of the Londoner's year and one which is peculiarly his own—the Lord Mayor's

Show. This ancient ceremony goes back to the days of King John, who decreed that the Mayor of the City should be presented each year for the Royal approval. The citizens, to show their endorsement of the man of their choice, used to accompany him as he rode on horseback, and the procession gradually developed into an annual pageant, increasingly elaborate as the years went by. In modern times, the theme of the pageant varies from year to year—maybe it is a military parade, or an agricultural display, or a tableau of Empire. But whatever it be, there are always the bands, the marching men, the cavalry, the lorries gay with bunting, the carts drawn by beribboned stallions, and—climax of the whole show—the Lord Mayor's famous Golden Coach. This lavishly carved and gilded carriage, now nearly two hundred years old, swings backwards and forwards on its supporting straps as it carries the new Lord Mayor in state to the Law Courts to take the oath before the Lord Chief Justice.

Those who happen to be in the City on the morning of 9th November may see the various sections of the procession getting ready in the side streets around Guildhall. They may be lucky enough to see the coach, drawn by six mettlesome steeds, go up to the great doorway and the Lord Mayor, wearing his gold chain and long state robe, with the sword borne on one side of him and the mace on the other, step into the swaying coach. In a moment the golden door is closed; the coachman in his three-cornered hat whips up his horses, a cavalry escort swings into position before and behind the coach, and the procession moves off—a long multi-coloured snake winding through the narrow streets towards the Law Courts. Once more London cheers, while the City workers flock to their office windows to join in as they hear the bands, and the clatter of the horses' hooves, and the sound of marching feet. A halt is called at the Law Courts while the Lord Mayor steps down from his coach and is sworn in,

after which the procession re-forms and wends its way down the Strand, past Trafalgar Square, along Northumberland Avenue on to the Embankment, and so back to the City. It is a gay and impressive ceremony with its pomp and humour and commercial symbolism, ranging from the grave and stately to the blatantly showy. In the mile-long pageant, which takes half an hour to pass a given spot, there is something to satisfy all tastes, and whilst Londoners of all ages turn out to see the show, it is perhaps the children who alone see it as it should be seen. The adult eye, when looking back, perhaps sees the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor as a powerful medieval prince, the controller of London's destiny, and second only to the King within his own square mile. But I think the children will always see just Dick Whittington riding by in his fairy-tale coach. For both, this is the last surviving pageant of the City, a time-honoured ceremony in modern setting, typical of the real London.

Our survey is over. The old year dies, a new year is born, and soon the same scenes will be re-enacted. The crowds will be there again—they will flock to the banks of the Thames, to Wembley, to Lord's, to the streets of the City. Many will have been before, others will be newcomers; all will form part of the old yet ever-changing pageant of London's life.







## LEGEND

CITY OF LONDON

BOUNDARY

GREATER LONDON

BOUNDARY

PRINCIPAL STATION

MAIN RAILWAYS

OUT OF LONDON

LONDON DOCKS L.D.

ROYAL DOCKS R.D.

INDIA & MILLWALL

DOCKS I&MD

SURREY COMMERCIAL

DOCKS S.C.D

(THESE DOCKS ARE

CONTROLLED BY THE

PORT OF LONDON AUTHORITY)

## HEIGHTS IN FEET

400

250

100

SEA LEVEL

